

ADELAIDE OF WULFINGEN,

1494. e. 5.

He. Ec.

A

Moore

TRAGEDY.

In four Acts.

(EXEMPLIFYING THE BARBARITY WHICH PREVAILED
DURING THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.)

FROM THE GERMAN OF

AUGUSTUS VON KOTZEBUE

AUTHOR OF THE STRANGER.

By BENJAMIN THOMPSON, JUN.

TRANSLATOR OF THE STRANGER.

AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY-
LANE.

Heu devota domus! — OVID.

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1799.



PERSONS.

Sir HUGO of Wulfinen, *a knight of the holy cross against the Saracens.*

Sir THEOBALD of Wulfinen, *a knight of the holy cross against the Pomeranians, and Vandals ;—son of Sir HUGO.*

ADELAIDE, *wife of Sir THEOBALD.*

WILIBALD, } *sons of Sir THEOBALD, 6 and 7 years old.*
OTTOMAR, }

BERTRAM, *an old boor.*

CYRILLUS, *an abbot of the Premonstrantes.*

MISTIVOI, *chief of a Heathen tribe.*

A MONK.

A CHILD.

Squires, Followers, &c. &c.

ADELAIDE OF WULFINGEN.

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

The stage represents an open place in a Heathen Village. In the back ground is an Idol overturned, and near it on an eminence, a cross erected. The Idol is naked, and has a lion's face. On its breast it bears a bull's head, in its right hand a club or battle-axe, and on its head a bird like a goose. On both sides are the remains of dwellings—some plundered and burning, others still smoking, and half demolished.

Sir Theobald of Wulfin gen and his Squire, making their way over the ruins.

Theobald

(Returns his sword into the scabbard, and throws himself breathless upon a billock.)

ENOUGH! Enough of toils and carnage! Sound my herald! Sound a retreat to yon merciless mob! I commanded you to fight, and ye have murdered. I pointed your swords against the breasts of men in arms, and ye have plunged them into the hearts of sucking babes.—Oh God, whose all-seeing eye has brooded with an awful gloom over the horrors of last night, here do I stand before the rising sun, the image of thy Majesty:—Here do I stand, and with self-acquitting conscience swear, that sacred to me have ever been the duties of my order. Blood has stained this sword, yet may every drop which has issued from the breast of a woman or a child, fall on my soul in liquid fire!—Ah! what distant cries of anguish strike my ear! The shrieks of women! the screams of infants!—Away, Bevy's! I too have a wife, I too have children. Away, Bevy's! thunder to the cowards, to cease the carnage of defenceless people, and let thy mace fell to the earth him who dares to disobey. *(The Squire*

A 2

goes)

goes) Oh! suffering Redeemer! There, amidst the carcases of the vanquished, have they fixed thy cross. The blood of the slain still trickles down the hill. True, 'tis but the blood of the heathens, yet surely the blood of men. And can these smoking ruins be an acceptable sacrifice in thy sight? My heart expands. An irresistible voice calls loudly to me: "They were all thy brethren."

A Child with tattered cloaths and disbevelled hair, is running affrighted past.

Chi. My mother! where's my mother?

The. (*Starts*) Boy! who is't thou seek'st?

Chi. (*Crying*) My mother! my mother!

The. Heavens!

Chi. Oh! they've killed my father and my little sister. My youngest brother lies yonder bleeding to death.—Where's my mother! Where's my mother!

The. Come to my arms, poor wretch!

Chi. There stood our hut; all is gone. Oh! how it burns! Our little garden is covered with ashes. Where can I go?—Mother! Mother! (*Runs away, and is still heard at a distance, calling in a tone of distress for its mother.*)

The. Hoo! How I shudder through my whole frame! How my bristling hair raises the helmet from my head!—Boy! Boy! cease thy cries. Thou criest the courage from my heart.—What is this courage? Boldness to encounter, or patience to endure? Perhaps both, and here both forsake me! Oh! what then is courage, if a whining child can thus unnerve a hero's arm? My knees totter when I catch a fading eye, and the groans of the dying make a very woman of me. 'Tis well the battle is over. I could not fight now.

The Squire returns.

Squ. All is silence. The streets are covered with carcases of men, women, and children. The honour of the Almighty is avenged.—The sanctuaries of the idols are demolished. The holy cross is seen on every side. But few heathens have escaped, some hundreds, with the chief of their tribe, are our prisoners. Our band returns triumphant and laden with rich booty.

The. Booty didst thou call it? Call it pillage,—pillage which I do not wish to share.

Squ. Not far from the village too, I found the monk, who accompanied us upon our expedition. I could not but laugh at the good man. In the heat of the battle he had climbed the highest oak, and was sily peeping through the branches. I told him that the danger was all over. Instantly he descended from his covert, and is following close at my heels.

The. Fierce as a boy to blow the bugle, and fearful as a boy to skulk into a corner when it sounds, has ever been their



their way. How strange are my sensations! An invisible hand tears away the cloud of artifice, and truth already dawns in the horizon. Would I were at home with the partner of my soul!

The Monk enters.

Monk. Praise be unto God! hail noble knight! the Lord was with your sword. Fallen are the proud heathens, and demolished their abominable idols. My eye is moistened with a pious tear—a tear of heavenly joy, when I behold the emblem of the holy cross, erected by your valiant arm.

The. Give me then your testimony, that I have honourably fulfilled my vow.—You well know how your Abbot, by the pious zeal, which flowed from his lips, by papal bulls, by absolution, and promises of blessing, persuaded me to this excursion. Give me your testimony in his presence, that I have fulfilled the word of a knight.

Monk. That will I.—I will relate to him what miracles of valour you performed in our holy cause before my eyes.

The. (*In a tone of derision*) Pardon me, good father! I was beneath your eyes.

Monk. And he shall double your absolution, shall extend it to your children, and bless you through a thousand generations.

The. 'Tis well. Then I shall be blest enough. Now, with the hand of a knight, take the irrevocable oath, that, as long as this arm can wield a sword or lance, it never shall again contend for the church, or for God, as you call it.

Monk. Sir knight, sir knight, you forget yourself.

The. I do not—little as I ever shall be able to forget the scenes of horror, which last night I witnessed. I hold you at your word. Did you not give your testimony that I had fulfilled my vow? Have not I, have not my ancestors yet done enough? Have you forgotten that for three and twenty years, I have been fatherless—that Hugo, of Wulfsingen, went to the holy land against the Saracens, and there probably found his grave?

Monk. A blessed martyr, if his blood flowed for the glory of God!

The. And yet my tears, and the tears of my mother, flowed for him.

Monk. Pearls in the crown of the just.

The. Fine words you have at command, good father.

Monk. The words of the church's servant; his testimony and his blessing bear the soul aloft, as upon the beams of light to heavenly bliss. Shielded by them no angel will obstruct your way. But if your choleric valour cannot brook empty words—'tis well, sir knight, to you belong *deeds*. Arise! Fight for the honour of your God! Is your army already weary? Is your sword already gorged? Behold, all the tribes which dwell

dwell upon the coast, are lost in careless indolence, and where perchance one fugitive escaped your arm, he has poured dismay and terror into every trembling heart. Arise! rally your followers! Away to fresh victories!

The. Spare your lungs, good father, I abide by my oath. Of what avail can these base conquests be to God, to you, my country, or myself? God needs no champion—I could once have reckoned among my followers, many a valiant warrior to wield the sword or battle axe. What are they now? Robbers, who spare neither age nor sex, and then cast lots for plunder.

A Follower of Sir Theobald enters.

Fol. Sir knight, we are conducting to your presence the chief of the tribe which we have conquered—Here is his banner. (*Presents a long staff, on the point of which is fixed the image of a bear, or any other wild beast.*) A proud and stubborn man,

Monk. Has he blasphemed?

Fol. Not so. He speaks but little, yet each word is a command. His impressive tone, his hoary locks, and his dignified mien, constrain the most stubborn to submission. He comes.

Mistivoi enters, guarded and in chains.

Mis. Whither will you lead me? Why do you drag me over the bodies of my brethren, and the smoking ruins of my former dwellings? Is it not alike to you where I die? Slay me, I'll go no further.

Gua. Bend thy knee before that cross.

Mis. Never!

Monk. How! dar'st thou insult our God?

Mis. Never did I insult your God, nor should I, had I been your conqueror.—Never did I bend my knee before your God, nor will I, though I am your slave.

Monk. Hear, sir knight! he attacks the honour of God. At the foot of the holy cross, let his blood, drop by drop—

The. Reverend father, I heard no attack. (*half aside*) Old man I venerate thy pride.

Monk. Sir knight, I command you in the name of God—

Mis. Is this your knight? Is this he, who, like a dastard, falls, when it is dark, on a defenceless tribe? Is this your knight? Is this he, who only draws his sword to plunge it in the hearts of infants?

The. (*Grasping his sword*) Man! But thy chains protect thee.

Mis. Why hesitate? 'tis but one murder more. Or dost thou think it a less honourable deed to butcher an infirm old man, than a poor helpless babe?

The. Rude man, thou dost mistake me.

Mis. Oh! I know thee well. The groans of the dying too plainly told me who thou art. How they all stand staring at

at me! Some with scorn, others with compassion. Stare at me still, but with scorn, not compassion.—Scorn I can return: Compassion hurts me.

The. Take off his chains, and leave us. (*Guards obey.*)

Mis. I know not, knight, is this benevolence? Have you thus rid me of my fetters, that I may die at liberty? Then, take my thanks. Or is it mockery? Wilt thou make me feel, that, even when free from chains, my arm can do no more. Then woe be on thy head! The first firebrand, which I seize, shall hurl thee to destruction.

The. I meant to dive into thy soul. I longed to converse coolly with thee. I wanted to find means to calm thy boiling blood. For this I took away thy chains.

Mis. Coolly!—Art thou mad? I had seven sons—they are all fallen. I had three daughters—thy villains have defiled and murdered them. I had a wife—a wife, who for forty years, had shared my joys and sorrows—there she lies, weltering in her blood.—Coolly! Coolly! I was chief of this tribe, revered and loved. Young and old assembled round me on festivals, and called me father. Even last night, I stood in the circle of my friends, and hailed the setting sun. To-day I stand alone—bereft of children—bereft of wife.—Coolly! Coolly! I had a peaceful dwelling, fertile fields and thriving flocks. My house is now a heap of ruins, my fields are all laid waste, my flocks are bleating for their shepherd.

The. (*Extremely agitated*) Hold!

Mis. (*Observes him closely, and after a pause*) Young man! Thy outward fashion seems assumed, perhaps imposed. What had I done to thee? We had never seen each other. I had never injured thee. Why didst thou fall on me and mine, when we had lost all our cares in sleep? Hast thou too children? Hast thou too a heart?

Theobald is abashed and silent.

Monk. We took arms by command of our God, to erect his holy cross among the heathen, to conduct the blind into the path of light, to convert wolves into lambs, and unite them to the flock of the Lord.

Mis. Then should ye have approached our lonely huts, with the palm of peace in your hands, and the honey of persuasion on your lips. Then should ye have preached the word of truth, and sent conviction to our hearts. Had ye done this, perhaps we had willingly followed your instructions.

Monk. Dost thou not acknowledge, then, our God's omnipotence, and your idol's nothingness? Behold! There in the dust it lies; the holy cross is reared on high.

Mis. Shallow boaster! Mortal hands have formed yon image: Mortal hands have formed this cross. Mortal arms have levelled that with the earth, and planted this upon the hill.—Why talk of *thy* God and of *our* God? We have but one

one God. And must the blood of hundreds then be shed, because one chuses a cross, another a lion's face, as the symbol of the Invisible?

Monk. Hear sir knight! He blasphemes.

Tbe. Peace, monk! Revere his age.

Monk. If thy heart pay less regard to God's honour than to his, 'tis well. Think then, at least, of all the dreadful ravages, which, for a long train of years, have been committed on our lands, by these rude barbarians, ever since Henry the Lion and Bernard of Ascania were no more. Think of the poor christians, who have been forced by them to bear the galling yoke of slavery. Think of the wives and children whom they have made widows and orphans.

Mis. Thou liest. Never has my little tribe, since I have governed it, advanced beyond its peaceful limits. Thou liest. Never have my subjects gained subsistence by plundering their fellow-creatures. Thou liest. Never have christians languished in our dungeons. I myself possessed but one. He was old, and more my friend than slave. Nor did I either force or betray him hither. I bought him of my neighbours.

Monk. A christian! Merciful God! Where is he? Whither has this sheep strayed? Has it not heard the voice of the shepherd?

Tbe. (*Who, throughout this scene, has appeared to have been deeply immersed in thought, now approaches the old man with exalted, yet timorous, mien, and offers his hand*) Can't thou forgive me?

Mis. (*Throwing back his hand*) Never! Thou hast robbed me of all, and were I now to forgive thee, thou would'st fill up the measure of thy cruelty—thou wouldst grant me life.

Tbe. But if I repair all that I am able to repair; if I replace thee in thy rights, collect thy scattered subjects round thee, release the prisoners, lay the bloody booty at thy feet, rebuild thy huts—

Mis. (*Raising his eyes towards Heaven*) Oh! my wife, my children!

Tbe. (*Stands as if struck dumb.—A solemn pause ensues.—Then with warmth*) Oh that the departed breath of life would but obey my voice! Yet thou, old man, whose silver locks inspire my soul with reverence unutterable, thou wert not merely a husband and a father; thou wert the head of a far larger family. On thy lips hung doctrines of wisdom and of peace. To thee they were indebted for ease and comfort; without thee they must have perished. Take back this staff, this ensign of thy dignity. Still make thy little people good and happy, and become a member of our church.

Mis. Young man, in thy eye beams the goodness of thy heart. I understand thee. This was not thy cruelty. (*With a glance towards the Monk*) Thou wert but the instrument.—

(*Presenting*

(*Presenting his band*) I forgive thee. The blood of the slain be not on thee, nor on thy children. I take back the staff, drenched in the gore of my friends. I take it, to do good, while my weary foot still rests upon the brink of the yawning grave. But my faith I never will renounce. I am old. My days can be but few. Already is the potter kneading the clay from which my urn is to be formed. In the belief of my fathers have I lived: In the belief of my fathers will I die.

Monk. Hear, sir knight! He blasphemes.

Mis. But to thee be full permission granted, to send men into my territories, who may peaceably announce those doctrines, of which they affirm themselves possessed. To my people, too, be full permission granted, to adopt those doctrines. If they but fulfil their duty towards me and their brethren, I shall be silent.

The. I am satisfied—But one condition more—Thou hast mentioned the purchase of a christian slave. My duty, as a knight, forbids me to leave him among heathens.

Mis. I go in search of him. But ere I leave thee, stranger, give me thy name.

The. Theobald of Wulfsingen.

Mis. And he, with whom thou speak'st is old Mistivoi; and as a proof that he no longer feels resentment, he divides this ring. (*Draws a ring from his finger, and breaks it*) Take this, and if ever thou again approach these dwellings, thou, or thy son, or grandson, let him send to me the half of this ring. Then will I acknowledge the bond of hospitality now made between us, and receive him in my hut—when I again possess one. (*After a pause of heart-felt sensibility*) Farewell!

The. (*Bursts into his arms*) Farewell! Be my friend.

Mis. I am thy friend. The blessings of thy God and of my God be showered upon thee! Trust me, youth, such men as we shall meet again, whether before the throne of Jehovah, or in the blissful habitation of Radegast. [*Goes.*]

The. (*Leans mournfully against a tree*) Be not ashamed of such a tear. Let it flow unchecked. 'Tis a tear that well becomes a knight.—What virtue, but may be found in this heathen? I took his all, and he forgave me. Blush christian, blush!

Monk. Sir knight, be on your guard. A heathen's virtue is but mere hypocrisy.

The. (*Peevishly*) Pshaw! Mutter thy litanies, and count thy beads. Thou shalt not subdue my faith in human nature.

Monk. This is the language of the tempter. Son of the church, steel thy heart! Armour of the Lord, shrink not from thy faith! Have you then, sir knight, forgotten the oath, which you swore before our pious abbot, at the altar? Have you forgotten the solemn protestation, that you would exterminate this cursed race? And yet live many hundred prisoners. Yet lives the proud imperious Mistivoi.

The. Yes, and shall live. I have fulfilled the dreadful vow; of this you have yourself given testimony. Not one more drop of guiltless blood shall now be shed.

Monk. Is this the language of a christian hero? Will you not rather restore their idols, and offer sacrifice to them, even at the foot of the holy cross?

The. Beware of derision, reverend father. Do you wish the propagation of the gospel? well! This too is provided for. You heard the agreement made between Mistivoi and myself.

Monk. An agreement with a heathen! A bond between Christ and Belial! you promised to save all that could be saved. You promised to return the costly booty, which was destined for our pious abbot and the church.—Where then are all your mighty plans?—You would clothe our altar. You would melt the impious ornaments of all their idols into golden chalices, silver censers, images of saints—

The. I understand you, reverend father. The booty shall be valued, and the loss made good from my own property.

Monk. Sir knight, I thank you in the church's name, but—

The. Not another But, lest I repent, that the cross upon my mantle, was received from the hands of your abbot. But yesterday, my zeal began to cool, my resolution wavered.

Monk. To cool—and wavered! You see, sir knight, how busy Satan—

The. Satan had nothing to do with it, good father.

Monk. How so, sir knight, how so? By what means?

The. By what means! Why should I be ashamed of the confession? By the tears of my wife. My Adelaide gazed at me with such anxiety, followed me so mournfully through every passage, heaved such deep sighs from her bosom—and when the servant entered with my armour, she burst into a flood of tears—but when I braced on my corselet, sorrow quite overwhelmed her—she threw her arms around my neck—

Monk. Sir knight, can you be turned aside by the toying of a woman?

The. No, good father. I know my Adelaide. 'Tis true I raised her from the humble cottage, to make her the companion of my life; but in her veins flows as noble blood, as if her ancestors had been a race of heroes.—Never has one thought, unworthy of her present rank, reminded me of what she was. How often, when I have been summoned to the field, has she, with her own hands buckled on my harness, and with cheerful mien gone with me to the castle gate! But yesterday, unaccountable presages seemed to labour in her breast. Her parting kiss was bathed in tears, and with a voice of heart-felt sorrow, she bade me to spare the unfortunate, but most to regard myself.

Monk.

Monk. To spare! Truly she was mighty generous. Are not these the very heathens, who, some eight years ago, in one of their excursions, dragged her father into bondage?

The. True, and Adelaïde has mourned his loss, but not by renouncing her humanity. The mean sensation of revenge is foreign to her.

A Follower of Sir Theobald enters with Bertram.

Fol. Sir knight, this is the christian slave sent by Mistivoi.

The. Come nearer. How long hast thou been a prisoner?

Ber. Eight years. No—but five years. The three last, spent in Mistivoi's hut, have not been years of slavery.

The. From what part of our country cam'st thou, that I may return thee to thy master?

Ber. I am a boor in the demesnes of Wulfsingen. My master is Sir Hugo of Wulfsingen.—

The. Whose son now stands before thee.

Ber. Then you must be Sir Theobald. Heaven bless you, noble sir!

The. Thy name?

Ber. Bertram.

The. (Starts) Bertram! Heavens! Had'st thou a daughter?

Ber. (Alarmed) A daughter!—No—Yes—

The. Is Adelaïde thy child?

Ber. (Extremely agitated) Adelaïde!—Yes—That is my daughter's name. Is she alive?

The. (Clasps him in his arms) Adelaïde is my wife!

Ber. (Cries aloud) Your wife!

The. My good, my much-loved wife!

Ber. God of Heaven! How is that possible?

The. To virtue and to beauty all is possible. I one day found her at a well. 'Twas not long after the heathens had carried thee off. She was weeping. I asked her the reason of her grief. "I am an orphan," answered she, "ere I could lift, I lost my mother; and but a few days since, the Vandals robbed me of my father." Her words, her tears, sunk deep into my heart. I went—and I returned. I saw her oft, yet never saw her enough.—My uncle had fixed upon a lady of high birth to be my wife—but all in vain! Already was I bound in the soft chains of love. I laughed at ancestry and riches. I led my Adelaïde to the altar.—Thanks be to Heaven, I never, for a moment, have repented such a choice! Come, old man, thou shalt be a witness of our happiness. Thou shalt see grandchildren.—

Ber. (Always alarmed) Grandchildren!

The. Two sweet lads, if I be not blinded by a father's fondness. But why dost thou thus tremble? Why dost thou thus wildly roll thy eyes around? Has the yoke of bondage
made

made thy heart insensible of joy? Or how? Dost thou think thou shalt be less my father, because blind fate has made thy son-in-law a knight, and thee a boor?—Fear it not. Thou art the father of my wife. I will revere thee. My children will revere thee. Thou shalt pass the remainder of thy days in undisturbed tranquillity.

Ber. I thank you, sir knight. Allow me another question.

The. Call me son.

Ber. Is your father yet returned from Palestine?

The. Alas! No. Why dost thou dash this wormwood in my cup of joy? For twenty years I have had no account of him. Doubtless he fell a sacrifice to the fury of the infidels, with many another knight, who went into the holy land.—Thousands of tears have I shed for him, as a child, on the lap of my mother; as a youth, on the grave of my mother; and as a man, on the bosom of thy daughter.—Let us quit the subject. Be the rest of this day dedicated to joy! Heavens! What a full measure of delight awaits my Adelaide! How much was she deceived by all her frightful omens! I go to found an immediate retreat. Hold thyself in readiness. In a few minutes we bend homeward.—

[*Goes with the Monk.*]

Ber. What have I heard?—Wretch that I am! Shall I then be reconducted to my brethren, only to plunge an affectionate couple into irrecoverable misery? Has God prolonged my days, only to involve me in a contest the most horrible, between religion and humanity? With a single word, I crush four innocent fellow creatures, drive them into wretchedness, and bring down the ban upon their heads.—No.—I *will* be silent. I'll tear my tongue from my mouth—Adelaide! My dear good Adelaide!—Oh! Why was I not allowed to die here in peace? (*The sound of a trumpet is heard at a distance*) The signal of retreat! But 'ere I go, another tear upon the neck of generous Mistivoi. Would it were the last that I am doomed to shed on earth!

[*Staggers over the ruins, leaning on his stick.*]

SCENE—*A Room in the Castle of Wulfsingen.*

The fat abbot Cyrillus enters and looks round.

Cyr. Not a mortal to be seen. For ever locked in her chamber, for ever kneeling to her crucifix, or among her maids with loom and spindle, or instructing her two boys!—Is this virtue, or is it her humour? Perhaps both. Perhaps too, neither. The title of noble lady has inflamed the daughter of a boor. She has somewhere heard of such a word as honour, a glittering toy, of which she shortly will be tired. Could I but arrive so far as to discover that the language of my eyes was no longer unintelligible, that when I gazed at
her

her with melting tenderness, she no longer looked at me with such—how shall I express it—such stupidity, such apathy—could I arrive so far as to see her eyes cast upon the earth, when in my presence, then—my game were won. If the knight allow me but sufficient time, if father Benjamin will but obey my orders in kindling his breast with enthusiasm, in dragging him from one nation to another, from one contest to another, in holding Heaven before his eyes, whenever his zeal flags—and if, in spite of all his intrepidity, some lucky heathen spear at last should reach his heart—Ha! What a golden opportunity! To console the mourning widow! To creep into her heart beneath the mask of pity!—But hold! Who comes? I was almost too loud.

Wilibald and Ottomar hop into the room.

Wil. God bless you, father abbot!

Ott. God bless you.

Cyr. I thank you, children. Where is your mother?

Wil. I don't know.

Ott. (*Consequentially*) But I do.

Cyr. Well, let us hear then, my little fellow.

Ott. But what will you give me, if I tell you?

Cyr. Are you so covetous? Will you do nothing unless paid for it?

Ott. O yes, to poor people. But my father says you are rich, and have more than you want.

Cyr. Does he say so? It seems then, I must bribe you.

Wil. Bribe! Fie, brother!

Ott. How can I help it, if he calls it so?

Cyr. Look, Ottomar! what a pretty picture!

Ott. (*Grasps eagerly at it*) Who is that man, with a great key?

Cyr. Saint Peter.

Ott. What can he do with that key?

Cyr. He can open the gates of Heaven. Now, tell me where your mother is.

Wil. You've taken a bribe. Now you must tell.

Ott. No.—There father abbot, take your picture back. My mother is gone to the village, to draw water from the well.

Cyr. She herself! Could she not send any of her servants? Are there not springs close to the castle gate? You must be lying, boy.

Ott. Do you know what I did lately, when great Bevys, my father's squire, told me I lied?

Cyr. Well?

Ott. I struck him on the face.

Cyr. And what did great Bevys do?

Ott. He ran to my father and told him. But my father was not angry.

[*Runs away.*
Wil.

Wil. And my father was right. [*Runs after his brother.*
Cyr. Like parents, like children!

Adelaide enters with two water-pitchers, and places them before the door.

Heaven blefs you, noble lady!

Ade. And you, reverend abbot!

Cyr. Is it then true? I thought that Ottomar had lied.

Ade. That he dare not, even though in jest. What was it that you would not credit?

Cyr. (*Pointing at the pitchers*) Your descending to the employment of a menial.

Ade. Does this surprise you, reverend abbot? You may perhaps mistake it for ostentation, since I have so many servants, and an industrious wife may be employed to better purpose, than in bringing water from the well. I will explain this, reverend abbot. To you my birth is not a secret. Eight years are on this day elapsed, since I went down with the same pitchers to yonder well. My tears were mingled with the water; for you may remember, at that time the Vandals had just robbed me of my father, the only prop of my poor helpless youth. Sir Theobald saw me, loved me, and made me the happiest of women. Shall I not celebrate this day? Long as I live, these pitchers shall retain their place among my bridal ornaments. Never do I fail, upon this day, as soon as I have finished my morning prayer, to visit yonder well. My reason tells me that it is to recollect my former lowliness. My heart tells me that it is to call to my remembrance, the first words, the first looks of my dear Theobald.

Cyr. This is commendable, noble lady. But beware lest your affection should become idolatry.

Ade. Oh! that my affection were capable of increase! Am I not indebted to him for every thing? Without him, what had I been? A deserted orphan, turned out into the wide world, and exposed to every violence. The tears of sorrow flowed into these pitchers, and for eight years I have shed none but tears of joy. Oh! that my affection were capable of increase! Oh! that this heart could love more fervently!

Cyr. (*Aside*) Torture!

Ade. (*Depressed*) For the first time, in all these happy years he is absent on this day. But, he is fighting for our holy church, and I must hold my peace. What think you, reverend father? May he soon return from this excursion?

Cyr. As it happens, noble lady. He swore to me that he would level with the earth the heathen villages which lay beyond the Elbe, and destroy the inhabitants with fire and sword. If he should find the wretches unprepared, he may
 with

with ease at once annihilate them. If not, the days may be prolonged to weeks.

Ade. (Raising her hands and eyes) Protect him, God of battles! 'Tis thy holy name for which he fights. Cover him, ye angels, with your wings. Conduct him back victorious, to the bosom of his affectionate wife, to the arms of his children!

Cyr. (Aside) Here am I again alone with her, and not a single syllable comes forth at my command.

Wilibald runs into the room.

Wil. Mother! The guard upon the tower has blown his horn.

Ottomar hops forward.

Ott. Mother! What a many men on horseback! They make a dreadful dust.

Ade. Has not the centinel discovered who they are?

Wil. They're too far off.

Ade. Go then, children. Climb upon the turrets, and when they are nearer, come to me again.

(The boys run away.)

Cyr. (Somewhat afraid) 'Tis not—one would hope—any hostile surprise.—

Ade. Oh fear it not, reverend abbot. My husband has no quarrels with his neighbours. Perhaps they may be guests: Then I am only sorry Sir Theobald is abroad.—Perhaps too they may pass on the left to Ermerisdorf.

Wilibald and Ottomar enter with a shout of joy.

*Both—*Mother! Mother! My father's coming! My father's coming!

Ade. My Theobald! *(Bursts out at the door, followed by Wilibald and Ottomar)*

Cyr. (As if thunderstruck) Ten thousand devils!—Father Benjamin! Father Benjamin! This is *culpa gravis*. *

* *The Premonstrantes make very nice distinctions between culpa levis, media and gravis.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

The stage represents a place in front of the castle of Wulfin-gen. In the back-ground is a part of the castle, surrounded by a moat, over which is a draw-bridge that falls when the curtain rises.

Adelaide, Cyrillus, Willibald and Ottomar pass swiftly from the castle-gate, over the bridge.

Ade. Oh! That I may not be deceived!

Wil. (*Hopping and springing*) No, mother, no! The guard on the tower knew my father's armour perfectly, and the white crest upon his helmet; and father Benjamin was trotting behind him on the mule.

Cyr. I congratulate you, noble lady.

Ade. Reverend abbot, I thank you. Run, children! Climb upon the hill, and tell me when they approach.

Both—(Running up the hill) Huzza! My father's coming! My father's coming!

Cyr. (*Concealing his vexation beneath a smile*) What transport these children feel!

Ade. Oh! Mine is not more sedate. Willingly would I run with them over every stone, were it but becoming in a wife. And why should it not? Custom and fashion are fell tyrants, and they impose their bondage even upon love and tenderness. Children, can you distinguish nothing?

Wil. (*Holding his hand above his eyes*) The sun dazzles me.

Ott. (*Raising himself upon his toes*) Ottomar's so little, mother.

Cyr. (*In a tone of derision*) It would seem as if the knight had but been paying a familiar visit.

Ade. (*Emphatically*) He has, I cannot doubt it, done his duty; and that he has done it in so short a time, deserves your thanks, as the author of the expedition, and mine, as the expectant wife. Willibald, can you see nothing?

Wil. Dust, dear mother, a great deal of dust, and amongst it something glitters like arms.

Cyr. (*In a tone of derision*) If they raise as much dust on their return, as at their departure, 'tis a happy sign that no one can have lost his life in the excursion.

Ade. (*Smiling*) I know not, reverend abbot, what inference I am to draw from your remarks. Do you mean to attack the honour of Sir Theobald: Or, why do you insult my ear with such discourse?

Cyr. Not so, noble lady——

Ade.

Ade. Not so, reverend abbot. I am not disposed for any interruption to my joy. Wilibald, can you still discover nothing?

Wil. (*Claps his hands*) Huzza, dear mother! It is my father! It is my father! I know his grey horse; and great Bevys is riding behind him, and father Benjamin upon the mule like a bear upon a beam.

Ott. I see them all too, mother.

Ade. I thank thee, oh! God, that thou hast listened to my fervent prayer, and thrown my dark presages to the winds!

Cyr. Presages, noble lady! Have you ever felt their influence?

Ade. Presages, or thick blood, or nervous terror—call it what you will. With fearful heart I always have surveyed the steed which was to bear my husband to the heat of battle. But never have I felt what yesterday oppressed me. Methought a world was laid upon me! Methought a gulf divided me from my beloved Theobald! Heaven be praised! 'Twas but ideal. My imagination catches such quick alarm.

Cyr. Be not so quick in your conclusions. Presages are the warnings of the Almighty. 'Tis true; your husband now returns in health. For this we render thanks to God and to Saint Norbert. Yet is there nothing but life, for which you tremble? I know full well, fair lady, that strict fidelity lies nearer to the heart of one, who loves like you. How if—(which Heaven forefend, but our tempter is ever on the watch)—how if Satan, in an enticing moon-light night, should have availed himself of some fair heathen, to ensnare the pious knight. I have seen these fiery dames. Lust is their idol. Modesty can find no sanctuary with them; and Sir Theobald, as they say, inherited warm blood from old Sir Hugo.

Ade. (*Smiling*) Reverend abbot, if you would not mistake the jest, I should freely tell you, that you bear poison on your tongue.—But hark! I hear the sound of horses' hoofs already echo through the valley. Come, children! Quick—to meet your father!

She runs with Wilibald and Ottomar to the side where Theobald approaches.

Cyr. Damnation! She is armed on every side.

Sir Theobald bursts into Adelaïde's arms.

Behind him enter the Monk, Bertram, &c. &c.

Ade. (*Throwing her arms round Theobald's neck*) My husband! So soon returned!

The. (*Rallying*) Not too soon, I hope.

Ade. (*The same*) Banterer! I could almost answer, yes.

Cyr.

Cyr. (Aside) And I could almost burst.

The. Never have I made so good an expedition!—Heaven bless you, reverend abbot!—I bring thee, Adelaide, a present more valuable far than all thy jewels.

Ad. Yourself.

The. Would'st thou make me vain? I have long been thine. No. I restore to thee a stolen treasure, which has cost thee many a tear. May he and I for ever share thy love! Look round.—Does thy heart guess nothing?

Ad. (*Spies Bertram, who, till now, has been standing, full of terror, among the attendants, and flies into his arms*) My father!

Ber. (*Returns her embrace, but sorrow and confusion overspread his countenance*) My dear daughter!

Ad. Oh! This is more than all my warmest hopes. Almighty Providence! I have no words to thank thee. Grant me tears! Oh! Grant me tears!—And is it really you, whom I thus fold in my arms? Alas! I feared that you had long since sunk beneath the weight of age and grief. I cannot look at you enough. You are just the same, except that your hair is somewhat greyer.—Oh! God! I have no words. My thanks are swimming in these tears.—Dear father, I am married.—These are my children. Come hither, Wilibald and Ottomar. This is your grandfather. Embrace his knees, and beg his blessing.

Wilibald and Ottomar kneel before Bertram.

Ber. (*Careless of them by turns, and raising them*) Rise! Rise! If the blessings of an old man—who loves you as his children—has any influence with the Almighty—I bless you.—God shield you from every misfortune—or give you strength to bear it!

Ad. How can misfortune enter in your thoughts at such a happy hour? All my wishes are fulfilled.

Wil. Dear grandfather, kiss me,

Ott. And me too, dear grandfather.

Ber. (*Kissing them*) Sweet boys! (*Mournfully*) Poor good children!

The. Why poor, honest Bertram? What is wanting to their happiness? Reverend abbot, such a scene as this might draw down angels from the throne of God.

Cyr. Fie, sir knight! To compare such earthly joys to the blissful contemplation of the Highest.

The. Pardon a layman, to whom the enthusiasm of religion has not yet lent wings, to soar into the third Heaven.

Cyr. Enthusiasm, do you call it? You heap levity on levity. But I pardon you, for the sake of that good work, which you have done. Your return was very sudden. Doubtless you have rooted out the heathen tribes, overturned their altars,
abolished

abolished their idols, and brought their gold and silver chalices for the service of the church.

Tbe. I have done all that I could : I have done more than I ought. My oath, as a knight, bound me, with fire and sword to exterminate the heathen idols, and erect the holy cross among them. Father Benjamin can testify I have fulfilled my oath.

Cyr. 'Tis well. But as the angel of the Lord assuredly was with your arms, why did you not proceed to all the neighbouring tribes, spreading destruction throughout the heathen territories ?

Tbe. Because—hear it once for all, reverend abbot,—because my sword shall never fall again on those, who never injured me. If they be sheep, which wander in the desert, let the right path be pointed out to them, but let them not be led to slaughter. I, at least, have no desire to be the butcher.

Cyr. Knight—

Tbe. Abbot—

Cyr. Do you pretend to dictate to the church ?

Tbe. (*Discontented*) Oh no, reverend abbot ! I know my duties, and fulfil them.—But, will you not participate our joy ? Look round, and read in every eye, the wish to spend in pure tranquillity a day, which Heaven has so singularly marked.

Ade. What can be the matter, my dear father ? You seem uneasy.

Ber. I am not well.

Ade. Quick ! Come in. You want rest. To day, so many different sensations have crowded on each other—

Ber. True ! True !

Ade. Come then. Lean on me, that I may bring you to a quiet chamber.

Ber. Not in this castle, my dear Adelaide. I am not used to live within huge walls and towers. Let me return to my old hut.

Ade. Your hut is in ruins, uninhabited, and exposed to every blast. Allow me the pleasure of attending on you.

Ber. (*With forced acknowledgment*) I must be left alone—or I shall die at your feet. I will have no other dwelling than my former hut.

Tbe. Your will is to your children a command. I will instant dispatch my people to repair your hut, and provide it with every convenience. Meanwhile, use the best chamber in my castle, and let a cheerful meal complete the pleasure of this day. Reverend abbot, is it your pleasure to follow us ?

Cyr. When I have fulfilled the duties of my office.

Tbe. Till then farewell !

Theobald and Adelaide follow Bertram. Wilibald and Ottomar, with the retinue, follow them.

Cyr.

Cyr. (*Looking at the Monk, with extreme gravity*) Well, father?

Monk. (*With great humility*) What does my worthy superior command?

Cyr. Yes! Pretend that you have executed all my plans, and justified my confidence in you.

Monk. My conscience acquits me.

Cyr. Indeed! Then I wish you joy of an easy conscience. You know not, I presume, how much I wished for time, how much I wished to plunge Sir Theobald from danger into danger, if possible to cause his death,—at least his absence for many weeks. You knew not that these were my only reasons for promoting the excursion?—Speak!—

Monk. How can I be ignorant that such were your intentions? Yet have I done every thing to prolong the expedition. I have not been content with empty words. I seized a sword, I plunged into the throng, and often was besmeared with hostile blood.

Cyr. Yes, forsooth! You have done so much, that nothing now remains for me to do, and I perhaps may wait in vain whole years, for such an opportunity. Will you not retire to rest after your numerous fatigues? You will scarcely recognize your cell—'tis so long since you forsook it. (*Goes*)

Monk. I have done my duty. We must pray to God to bend their hearts, and grant his aid to all these good intentions. (*Goes*)

Sir Hugo of Wulfsingen, in the habit of a pilgrim, appears upon the summit of the hill, which rises opposite to the castle.

Hu. Ha! There it is! There is Wulfsingen!—Hail, castle of my fathers! Hail, ye moss grown towers! In blooming manhood I forsook you. In drooping age I now again behold you. I left these gates, accompanied by a hundred valiant warriors: the swords of the Saracens have slain them, and I return alone.—(*Descends the hill, and, for a few moments, surveys the castle with violent emotion*) All is as I left it. No stone is broken: no tree is fallen. I could almost fancy that the swallows' nests against the wall were still the same.—There, in the shade of yonder towering oak, I, for the last time, pressed to my heart my weeping wife, and blessed the child, that hung upon my knee.—There, beneath the roof of yonder straw-thatched cottage, I for the last time, held the infant in my arms, the offspring of my crime, the source of my never-ceasing anguish.—Alas! what a crowd of sensations, which have slept for three-and-twenty years, wake in this solemn moment! Great God of Heaven! I thank thee, that thy angel, thro' so many perils, has thus brought me to the habitation of my fathers, were it but to lay my sapless bones with their's.—How my heart beats! Even more than at the storm of Ptolemais. Each tree, each stone could I ask, is my wife, and is my son alive

alive?—The windows of the castle are forsaken: The bridge is down: No reaper in the field. Here peace must reign, or the plague must have exhausted its fury.—Thou guardian angel of my latter days! Whisper to me whether joy awaits me in this castle: or, shall I turn again to Palestine, and seek some heap of earth, where the poor pilgrim may repose in peace for ever?

Wilibald and Ottomar come from the castle.

Ott. Come, Brother! I'll shew you the nest, that I found yesterday.

Wil. Is it high? Must one climb?

Ott. No. It's only in a low bush.

Wil. Then I don't want to see it.

Ott. Why not?

Wil. Where there is neither trouble nor danger, there can be no pleasure.

Hu. Two sweet boys! my heart throbs.

Ott. Look brother, at that man with a long beard. Let us go.

Wil. No. We'll speak to him.

Ott. I'm afraid.

Wil. Then go, and look for your nest. (*To Hugo*) Who are you, old man?

Hu. A pilgrim from Palestine.

Wil. From Palestine! Do you bring any news of my grandfather?

Hu. Your grandfather! Who is your grandfather?

Wil. (*With pride*) The valiant Sir Hugo of Wulfsingen. Have you ever heard of him?

Hu. (*Scarce able to contain himself*) I believe I have.

Wil. (*Contemptuously*) You believe you have! You have not heard of him, or you would not have forgotten it.

Hu. (*Turning aside and trembling with joy*) Oh! God! What a boy is this! And this is my blood!—Compose thyself, old man. Thy hour is not yet come.

Ott. (*To his brother*) What is he muttering to himself?

Wil. I believe he is thinking of some lie.

Hu. Allow me to ask a question, my dear boy. Who is the knight, that dwells in yonder castle?

Wil. Sir Theobald of Wulfsingen, my father.

Ott. (*Raising his voice above Wilibald's*) And my father too.

Hu. (*Turning away—with the utmost possible energy*) God of Heaven! I thank thee.—One question more. You spoke of your grandfather, who went to Palestine. (*With tremulous utterance*) Have you then still—a grandmother?

Wil. No. She has long been dead.

Hu. (*Trembles, and slowly repeats the words*) Has long been dead! (*Aside, sorrowfully*) Margareta! (*Endeavours to compose himself*)

himself) Dear children, I am faint and weary. Dare I beg a crust of bread, and a cup of wine?

Both. Directly!

(They are running to the castle)

Hu. And if your father would allow me a night's lodging in the castle—

Wil. I'll ask my mother. My father's just returned from battle, and asleep. I daren't wake him. Ottomar, stay here till I come back.

Ott. *(Running after him)* I won't stay alone with that long-bearded man.

(Both go)

Hu. Oh God! Have then the sufferings of three and twenty years at last appeased thee? Is it then true, that I shall yet find happiness? Hast thou, too, forgiven me, oh! Margaretta, my acknowledged wife? Didst thou not quit this world, with a curse upon my head? Yes. I am unworthy of the bliss, which now awaits me. Let me but have happy tidings of my Adelaide, and angels may envy my old age.—What boys! Scarce could I refrain from folding them in my arms. Of what race may their mother be? Early has she sown the seed of love and honour in their hearts. God reward her for it!—Right glad I am, that no one here can recognize me. The hearts of my son and daughter-in-law will lie open to me. I shall try their kindness and their hospitality. I shall see if Theobald still remembers his old father, if he wishes his return, if he will shed a tear for his death. What a scene, if all should happen as I wish!—Let me only be upon my guard, lest a father's heart too soon betray itself.

Adelaide comes with Wilibald and Ottomar.

The Boys. There he is, mother! There he is!

They run to him with the cup of wine, and crust of bread.

Hu. Heaven reward you, noble lady! And you too, good children!

Ad. You are welcome, old man. If my boys have understood you right, you are come direct from Palestine.

Hu. Noble lady, it is true. I have passed through Greece, Bulgaria and Hungary. For five long months, I have contended against hunger, thirst, and all the hardships of this life. Oft has Heaven been my roof, and the cold earth my bed. Oft have I fought, whole days in vain, a spring where I might quench my thirst,—a hut, where I might beg a piece of bread.

Ad. How, at your age, could you attempt so long a journey?

Hu. My earnest wish to see my native country once again, to die where I was born, to have my eyes closed by the hands of my children.—

Ad. Have you children, too? Oh! How will they rejoice!

Hu.

Hu. So says a father's heart.

Ade. Each day of absence, when friends meet again, is a fresh drop in the cup of joy. Be thankful to Heaven, old man, for such bliss as yours is dealt with a sparing hand. My husband, also, had a father, who, more than twenty years ago, followed our emperor to the holy land. There probably he perished. Have you, in your travels, never heard the name of Sir Hugo of Wulfsingen?

Hu. Sure have I, noble lady. Still more, I bear a message from him to his son.

Ade. (*With fire*) Indeed!—Speak! Does he live?

Hu. He lives.

Ade. And your message—?

Hu. I can confide to none but Sir Theobald.

Ade. Enter then with me.

Hu. Pardon me, noble lady. I have made a vow never to enter house or castle till the sun has set.

Ade. Run, then, children! Wake your father, and tell him instantly to come here: (*They go*) May I be a witness of your conversation?

Hu. I request it.

Ade. At length, our fervent prayer is heard. Oh! that we still may hope to sweeten his declining days!

Hu. Pardon my curiosity, fair lady. It arises not from forwardness. Dare I ask from what race Sir Theobald chose his worthy wife?

Ade. (*Somewhat confused*) Dare I answer you, from woman-kind?

Hu. I do not understand you.

Ade. I mean, that if domestic virtues flourish but in one generation, I can have no pretensions to them. My ancestors possessed no castles: Their names were never known in heraldry. But, if fidelity, piety and virtue, have any claim upon a knight's affections, I will not change my heart for that of any noble lady.

Hu. (*Somewhat struck*) Then you are not of noble origin?

Ade. No, old man—yet not on that account ignoble. I am but the daughter of a boor. My father has no other title than—an honest man.

Hu. (*Aside*) Now, old fool! Again stumbling over childish prejudice! After being twenty years in search of wisdom, on the first, the happiest occasion, reverting to thy nurse's whims!

Ade. My declaration seems to have surprised you. Perhaps you are acquainted with Sir Hugo's sentiments upon this subject. Will he think me unworthy to be called his daughter?

Hu. Fear it not, noble lady. As far as I can answer for him, he is incapable of such injustice. At first it may have some effect, and bring a frown upon his forehead; for you
know

know not how difficult it is to shake off the prejudices of our childhood. Proud, and assured of having trod them under foot, still at every turn they rise again. Yet sure I am, Sir Hugo's forehead will be clouded for one moment only. And when he sees and hears, that you, by steadfast love deserve your husband's heart, that you fulfil, with diligent attention, the duties of a mother, he will not deny his blessing on the union.

Ade. Your consolation crowns my happiness. Yes, the purest tenderness alone once joined our hearts, and for eight years it never has been interrupted.

Hu. (*Almost forgetting himself*) Then may Heaven pour its choicest blessings on you! (*Recollecting himself*) This I may freely beg in Hugo's name.

Ade. (*With uplifted hands*) Oh! all ye host of Heaven! Conduct him to our arms, quick as our wishes. How happy will I make his latter days! With what care and tenderness will I watch over him! How will my prattlers hang upon his knees, play the dull hours away, and read his smallest wishes in his eyes!

Hu. (*Aside, deeply affected*) Oh God! Dash from my lips this teeming cup of joy, lest in my intoxication, I forget my gratitude to thee!

Ade. There comes my husband.

Hu. (*Aside*) Steadfast, old man!

Sir Theobald *enters with* Wilibald and Ottomar.

The. Where is the pilgrim, who has named my father? Welcome with this hand! Thou art the messenger of God.

Hu. Sir knight, I greet you. The Lord be with you, and with your house!

The. Thou hast known my father! Speak! My heart yearns to hear thy message.

Hu. For more than twenty years, Hugo of Wulfsingen has been my friend. I have fought at his side in Parthia, Media, Mesopotamia, and Persia. Oft, with fraternal love, we bound each other's wounds, inflicted by the sabres of our enemies. Oft, with fraternal love, we shared the last dry crust, the last poor draught; until the wayward chance of war divided us. For when the emperor Frederick died, he went towards Aÿkelon with English Richard, surnamed Cœur de Lion. There was the battle between Saladin and us. Fierce and bloody was the contest. Many a valiant knight was left upon the field. Among the rest your father was supposed to have fallen, and I spent many tedious years in vain enquiries after him. At length, weary with toil, I, eight months since, resolved on my return to this my native land, when unexpectedly, I found old Hugo among the sultan's prisoners in Babylon.

Adelaide and Theobald

(*Cry aloud*) A prisoner!

Hu.

Hu. Thus it is, fir knight. He pines away in grievous thralldom. How was his visage altered! Scarce could I recollect the features of my friend. His cheeks were fallow—his eyes sunk—his beard long and knotted. With tears he threw his arms and chains around my neck, lamenting that he saw no end to his miserable days. He shewed me his bed: It was a stone.—A pottsherd filled with water was his drink.—A little rice was all his meagre diet.

The. Oh, my unhappy father!

Hu. "Alas," said he, "dear Robert, thou see'st the base condition in which I languish, the chains that gall my hands and feet. But how my body is exhausted by the noon-tide heat, and labours, to which I am not enured; how the blood gushes from my back upon my keeper's whip; how the cold dews, and the unwholesome damps of night, within this prison, rob me of sleep, of health and peace,—this, friend, thou dost not see."

The. Hold, I beseech thee, hold! Each word is a dagger to my heart.

(*Adelaide weeps*)

Hu. "Thou," continued he, "thou happy man, art now returning to thy native country. May the Almighty be thy guide! But, should'st thou pass my castle, commend me to my wife, if she be still alive, and my son Theobald. Paint to them all that my age is forced to suffer. Awake in their bosoms the feelings of a wife and son, that they may quickly gather all that Heaven has bestowed upon them, and hasten to relieve from cruel bondage, a husband and a father. Meanwhile, farewell! I shall count the days of thy pilgrimage, and on this stone will I pray, the long long nights, that angels may direct thee on thy way."

The. Thanks, worthy old man, thanks for thus faithfully fulfilling his directions! Quick! What is his ransom?

Hu. (*Shrugging his shoulders*) Ten thousand gold bizantines.

The. 'Tis much: 'tis very much. But God will lend his assistance. We must sell our castle, my dear wife, we must convert every thing into money, and do the utmost we are able.

Adel. With all my heart, dear Theobald! This moment I will bring my jewels, golden clasps and bracelets.

Wil. And you shall have my dollar too.

On. (*Sorrowfully*) Have I nothing to give?

Hu. (*Aside*) My heart will break.

The. (*Embracing Adelaide*) I thank thee, my good wife. I thank you, children. This moment binds my heart to you for ever.

Hu. (*Aside*) And mine too.

The. We will retire to a cottage, and till the earth. Bread we shall never want, and instead of luxuries, let us feast on the delightful expectation, that we shall liberate my poor old father. I hasten to the abbot. He has long coveted my de-

mesnes. When he knows my wants, he will pay but niggardly. It matters not, if he will only give us what we want directly.

Hu. (Aside) I can hold no longer.

The. Enter, old man, and refresh yourself with what my castle contains. My wife will let you want for nothing—See! Here comes Bertram—let him be a partaker of our joyous hopes.

Hu. (Aside) True, 'tis Bertram. Oh that I durst but call to him: Where is my daughter?

Bertram comes from the castle.

Eer. You have left old Bertram quite alone.

The. Come hither. Grieve and rejoice with us. This pilgrim brings accounts of Sir Hugo, my father. He is a slave in Babylon. But this day I'll sell my castle and demesnes, cast all at the Sultan's feet, and conduct my father back in triumph.

Ber. (Fixes his eyes attentively on Hugo) How is this?—Sure I am not deceived!—Those features—

Hu. Thou art not deceived. I am he.

Ber. (Throws himself with a loud cry at Hugo's feet) Sir Hugo!—My master!

At these words all start, utter broken syllables, half-articulated sounds of joy, astonishment, and admiration, and surround the old man. Theobald and Adelaide hang upon his neck, while Wilibald and Ottomar embrace his knees.—The curtain falls.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

A saloon in the castle. On the walls hang eight pictures, large as life, the ancestors of the race of Wulfsingen.

Sir Hugo, clad in armour, enters with Bertram.

Hu. Here we are secure. Here we shall not be overheard by monks or women. Come nearer! Answer me! Read the question in my eyes.

Ber. (With fearful hesitation) You wish for information of your daughter?

Hu.

Hu. Tedious babbler ! How can this climate make these men so cold ? Speak ! Speak ! Be not so sparing of thy words.

Ber. Ah !

Hu. A sigh ! I understand thee. She is dead.—Another soul is gone, to denounce vengeance against me, at the throne of God.

Ber. Would to God that she were dead !

Hu. What say'st thou ? Is she dishonoured ?

Ber. Sir knight, prepare yourself for a recital.—To you the world is not unknown.—You are well aware what chance—fate—Oh God ! My tongue denies its office. Your hair will bristle towards Heaven, your blood congeal with horror in your veins.

Hu. To whom dost thou say this ? I have lived full sixty years. For five and thirty, I have been a knight. Since I forsook the cradle I have been the sport of fortune, have learnt to distinguish truth from error.—If she be not dishonoured, speak ! I am prepared for all.

Ber. For fifteen years your daughter was educated as my own. She increased in stature, beauty, worth. She enchanted every youth, attended on my age, and managed, on my wife's decease, my little household. Never did any one suspect her to be other than the real daughter of old Bertram. My wife died, and carried the secret with her to the grave. I alone was able to solve the mystery of her descent. I knew your sentiments, sir knight ; I resolved never to withdraw the veil which covered what was past ; and, as she now had reached a proper age, I cast my eyes around, in search of some good lad, who would promote her happiness.

Hu. Right, old man ! Such was my wish.

Ber. The inscrutable designs of Providence have willed it otherwise.—Once, on a festival, in honour of our guardian saint, the villagers proceeded early to the abbey, leaving behind them only the old men. To my daughter, too, I granted permission to accompany her friends, as I myself was unable to attend her. The neighbouring Vandals had waited for this moment, when all our strength was absent. They fell upon our village, where not more than fifty persons were left, plundered our dwellings, drove away our cattle, and took the old men prisoners who had staid behind—among the rest, myself. Eight years passed away. I was a slave among the heathens—my daughter dead to me, and I to her. But this morning—(Oh ! why have I survived it ?)—but this fatal morning, I was released from bondage by your son. I came, and found your daughter—in the arms of her brother.

Hu. (*Starts like a man, who suddenly espies a phantom, but has courage enough to run towards it, and unmask it. The muscles of his face, for some moments, express an inward struggle, which, however, soon subsides. That serenity which ever accompanies firmly-*

rooted principles, resumes its place in his countenance, and he turns to Bertram) Well! proceed.

Ber. (Astonished) Proceed!—Pardon me, sir knight. Anguish has robbed you of your senses, or you have not understood me.

Hu. Nor one, nor the other. I still am waiting for the dreadful story which will cause my hair to bristle towards Heaven.

Ber. Blessed Virgin! Is not this dreadful enough? Your son the husband of your daughter—your grandsons sprung from incest—your family subjected to the church's ban!—

Hu. Is Adelaide faithless? Is my son a robber? Are my grandsons villains?

Ber. Oh no, no! There lies all the misery. They love each other with such strong affection, and yet must part for ever. They have children too, who resemble angels, and these little innocents they must resign to scorn and infamy.

Hu. Must! And who shall force them?

Ber. Heavens! Can you ask, sir knight? Are you a christian, and would suffer this abomination?

Hu. Why not? Old man, thy scruples I can pardon. Papal superstition has instilled them, ignorance of the world has nursed them, and custom given them gigantic strength.—But, let us view a little closer the shadow which so much startles thee. What mischief can ensue from this connexion? Two hearts, attached by a double tie, what increase can their love, their happiness, admit? A mother by a brother, are not the children still more precious? Are not the parents still more enviable?

Ber. All true, sir knight. But——

Hu. Hold! The picture is not half complete. I have but painted them within the castle: let us now look without.—Can a good father and a tender husband be a bad neighbour? Can he covet his neighbour's property, who, with *this* wife, and *these* children, thinks himself far richer than a prince?

Ber. Just and true, sir knight. But the sin——

Hu. Sin! Whom does it affect? Not *me*. Perhaps *thee*. Be easy, old man. This phantom too I dare be sworn I can dissolve. Yet, there are higher duties, thou wilt say, than I have mentioned, duties towards God.—

Ber. Alas! There it rests——

Hu. Hold again!—Will he pray less fervently? And mark! his prayer is not the urgent and insatiable coveting of riches and of honours. 'Tis gratitude which streams from a contented heart. Will he fight less bravely for his country and the church, than the vagabond whose courage is not fired by any thought on wife and child? Will he with less piety receive the holy sacrament, when he beholds the companion of his life devoutly kneeling by his side? Will the pangs of conscience, in his last hour, assail him, because, true to the impulse

impulse of nature, he has given to his native land two useful citizens, to the world two honest men, to Heaven two angels?—No! No! No! With joyful assurance will he appear, accompanied with his wife and children, before the throne of the Almighty, receive his sentence without trembling, and join his voice to the Hallelujahs of the blessed —

Ber. But God's absolute commandment that we should not——

Hu. I know what thou would'st say. God's first commandment was the happiness of us, his creatures. This commandment is as old as the creation. It extends to every nation, every religion. What Moses, through the mouth of God, established for the welfare of a single state, what, perhaps, may really promote the welfare of every state, must, at least, be subject to exceptions, and never was a case more worthy of exception.—Here then, old man, give me thy hand with confidence, and let this secret be concealed for ever. Still let Adelaide be Bertram's daughter. Rejoice with me at the happiness of our children. Rejoice with me, and be silent.

Ber. As God may have mercy on me in my dying hour, I cannot, sir knight, I cannot. That inward consciousness of an avenging God rises in opposition to your arguments. You have addressed my senses—they are weak; address my heart, and I will listen to you.

Hu. Thy heart!—Shall I paint the misery which thou bring'st upon us all? Shall I describe the horrible distresses of my children, and my grandchildren—the despair of thy old master?—Shall I—(unwillingly I do it) shall I remind thee of the many kindnesses which I poured first on thy old parents, and since on thee?

Ber. (*Falling and embracing his knees*) Oh no, dear sir! To you I am obliged for all. 'Tis written in my heart. But pay more reverence to God than man. Sacrifice the temporal rather than risk the eternal. Oh! could you feel the pangs of hell, which rage within me, you would have compassion on me. Oh that I could erase the tale of horror from my recollection! At least, let me shake the burden from my heart at the confessional chair. Our reverend abbot——

Hu. (*With grim ferocity*) Peace! Listen to me, for the last time. If the misery of my children, the distresses of their boys, the despair of thy benefactor, can have no effect upon thee—hear this solemn oath, which, on the word and honour of a knight, I pledge in the ear of the Almighty. If, with a single look, a syllable, or sign, thou dar'st to hint at this our secret, with my own hand I'll plunge my sword into thy heart.

Ber. Do with your servant as may be your will. My last breath shall bless you. But my troubled conscience orders me, in terms more dreadful than your oath, to ensure the sal-

vation of my soul. As yet your children may do penance for their sin, and through temporal misery ascend to spiritual bliss. But tell me—what can I answer, when your son appears before the dread tribunal of the Judge, and thus accuses me: "This man was privy to it. He concealed the impious secret. He robbed me of the only means by which my soul could have been rescued from damnation?"

Hu. Hear me, Bertram. Wilt thou be easy, if my son, when told of all, should think as I do?

Ber. (*Scrupulously*) Then—perhaps—I might—

Hu. Go then, and send him hither.

Ber. How? Would you—

Hu. I will myself disclose the secret to him? but, at first without a witness. Be thou at hand, and wait till called.

Ber. (*As he leaves the saloon*) Oh all ye faints! Have pity on a poor old man, bending beneath the weight of conscience!

(*Goes.*)

Hu. Such are the cursed fruits of superstition! But what must I expect in this approaching hour? Theobald must be tried, ere I venture the discovery. Should he be so weak as to prefer the dogmas of a monk to the everlasting law of nature—should his head and heart too be swayed by bigotry, let my tongue be silent, and let Bertram die. 'Tis better that one, already on the brink of the grave, should be a victim to his blindness, than that my whole race should fall a sacrifice to prejudice, and sink for ever.

Sir Theobald enters.

The. You have sent for me, my father.

Hu. My son, come nearer. We are alone. I have much to ask of thee, and much to say to thee. I left thee a boy, occupied in climbing among the wood, and stripping the hazel of its nuts. Thou art now become a man, and thy amusement is to break a lance in combat. Hast thou acquired fame at any tournament?

The. Twice, my father. At Worms and Regensburg. Both times in presence of our Emperor.

Hu. 'Tis well. Hast thou ever been engaged in honourable quarrels, and settled them as well becomes a knight?

The. Thrice for my friends, and for myself but once.

Hu. Why that once, and against whom?

The. Against Conrad of Rudolfheim. His servants had been guilty of disorders in a neighbouring village, had seized a woman, and destroyed a house; and he refused reparation.

Hu. When didst thou make peace with him?

The. When he was conquered.

Hu. 'Tis well. Hast thou never lost thy shield?

The. Never, my father.

Hu. 'Tis well. Hast thou any wounds?

The.

The. Five.

Hu. All on thy breast?

The. (Rather hurt) All, my father. (With exalted heat) In the abbey of Ermerisdorf hangs a hostile banner. I placed it there.

Hu. 'Tis well. Who instructed thee in arms?

The. My uncle.

Hu. Who conferred knighthood on thee?

The. Duke Henry, the Lion, of Brunswick.

Hu. 'Tis well. Thus far 'tis all right well. Embrace me.

The. (Embracing him) And now, my father—

Hu. Hold! Our account is not yet settled. How long is it since thy mother died?

The. Nine years. She expired in my arms, and was buried with the bones of our father.

Hu. (Turning away) Margareta! (To Theobald) Did she die calmly?

The. Calmly and full of hope. She died as she had lived. She blessed yourself and me. (Extremely moved) Oh my father! Will you open all my wounds afresh?

Hu. 'Tis well. Who gave thee instructions in religion?

The. Father Bernard, a monk of the Premonstrantes

Hu. This is not well. Which of thy duties is to thee most sacred?

The. My father, I have not considered this. To me they are all sacred.

Hu. Right, my son, but not all of equal weight. Duty towards God is the first duty—next honour—then love—and then the church.—Or, makest thou no distinction between God and church?

The. The church is in the place of God.

Hu. But is not always the mouth of God—Hear me, my son. Receive and ponder my discourse. After sixty years of cool experience, a father now addresses his only, his beloved son, whose happiness will ever be his warmest wish. To-day or to-morrow, I may be gone. With a lie upon my tongue I durst not look into eternity.—Hear me, ye spirits of my ancestors! You I summon, as witnesses of truth. Strike me with icy numbness, and spit sharp venom on me, if this last branch receive destructive doctrines from me: (Kneels down) And thou, Eternal Being, whom I worship, take from me the bitterness of this hour, and let it overtake me on my death-bed! Praise be unto thee that I have found him an intrepid knight: But let me find him likewise resolutely steadfast—with a heart equal to his courage.—Let me find him iron towards prejudice,—wax towards love and honour.

The. Your discourse, dear father—

Hu. My son, more than three hundred years are passed away, since Hans of Wulfsingen built this castle. He was the first

first of all our race, whose own valour girded on his loins the sword of knighthood. Our emperor, Conrad the first, dubbed him in the year nine hundred and twelve, upon the very field, where he had shed his blood, in fighting for his native country against Hungary. He married Wulfhild of Sickingen, and from love towards her, he called this castle Wulfsingen. He was slain in a quarrel for an image of Saint Paul, which his attendants had secretly suffered to be stolen. This, his son, (*Pointing to the second picture*) Egbert of Wulfsingen, was accused of having murdered one Count Baldwin. The sacred tribunal, before which he was tried, obliged him to attest his innocence by the sword. He was slain, but his last breath affirmed the accusation to be false and villainous. (*Pointing to the third picture*) His son, Maximilian of Wulfsingen asserted, at some jovial banquet, that the image of the Virgin Mary, which worked miracles at Emmerick, was a pious fraud. He was, in consequence, secretly assassinated by the instigation of the monks.—(*Pointing to the fourth picture*) His son Henry of Wulfsingen, not profiting by the example of his father, dared to utter some unmeaning words against the pope's authority, was subjected to the ban, and, forsaken by his friends died broken hearted. (*Pointing to the fifth picture*) His son, Albert of Wulfsingen, fearful and weak from the example of his fathers and the education of a monk, gave half his fortune to the cloisters, endowed the church with many of his best demesnes, died with a relique in his hand, and was almost canonized. (*Pointing to the sixth picture*) His son, Herman, of Wulfsingen went on an excursion, to convert the heathens to our christian faith. His heart betrayed him. He became attached to a fair heathen, and was compelled to leave her, because she continued faithful to the idolatry of her forefathers. He married Maria of Simmern, who bore one son, but ill supplied to him the place of the good heathen. He arrived at a discontented old age, and died. (*Pointing to the seventh picture*) My grandfather, Otto of Wulfsingen, from some long smothered resentment, was assaulted by three villains of the house of Leiningen as he was returning somewhat weary, from the chase. They slew him, and took refuge in a Bénédictine cloister, where, for a sum of money, they were pardoned in the name of God, and not a mortal dared to bring an accusation. (*Pointing to the eighth picture*) My father, Francis of Wulfsingen, wishing to revenge his father's death, and enraged in a just cause, struck a lay-brother of the Bénédictines, was subjected to the ban, excommunicated, and died in misery. Well can I recollect the grief of my poor mother! But of that no more. I myself, my son, I myself have completed this number of unhappy beings whom superstition has plunged into destruction. I am not ashamed to tell thee, that for one moment, I have been a villain—and what man is without such moments? One only wicked

wicked deed has been to me the source of endless agony. Thy mother was a good woman, tho' beauty was not her inheritance. She loved me, while I was but her friend. It was not in my power to press her with ardour to my bosom. For her I seldom felt desire, and often avoided her embraces. Whether she were ever conscious of what passed within me, I am ignorant. She herself—(God reward her for it!) she herself never uttered one harsh word to me, never received me with a frown, and forced from me, my whole respect. But this was all—My love—(*Stammers*) I must disclose it as a warning to my son—my love was oft bestowed on prostitutes, and every woman but my wife, inflamed my passions. Once on a parching summer's day, I met a lovely creature in the field. Her name was Rosamond. She was an orphan. She had nothing left in this wide world, except her honour—and of that I robbed her.—Thou start'st! Thou shudder'st! Right my son! Let this moment never be erased from thy remembrance. Heaven is my witness I had ever been an upright man—except in this one instance. Dost thou see the tear that starts into my eye? Of these I have shed millions, yet each still scalds my soul as if it were the first. The poor creature bore a girl in secret, and expired. I entrusted the unhappy fruit of my transgression to an honest boor, whose wife had lately been delivered of a dead child. He swore eternal secrecy, and reared the forsaken being as his own daughter.—My peace of mind was gone. In motion, or on my pillow, the pallid image of my Rosamond was floating in my sight. In motion, or on my pillow, her dying groans assailed my ear. To regain tranquillity, I vowed an expedition to the holy land against the Saracens, forsook my wife, my child, and country, to follow our emperor Frederick the Redbeard, and in the name of God to murder men, who never had offended me. Oft as I plunged my sword into the vitals of a Saracen, I fancied that his blood would cleanse me from my sin. In vain! I writhed myself, in anguish, on the holy tomb. In vain! I imposed severe penance on myself, and went through many a weary pilgrimage. In vain! Nor scourge, nor absolution, could avail to cure the viperous sting of conscience. At length, I was dangerously wounded in a skirmish, and taken prisoner by the sultan of Babylon. There, for twenty years, I languished in the fetters of the infidels, till at last, with other knights, I was ransomed by the emperor of the Greeks. Weary of a delusive world, full of anxious wishes to behold my family and home, I took a pilgrim's staff, and am, this day, returned.—I find my wife no more, and my daughter (*Keenly rivetting his eye upon his son*)—in the arms of her brother.

The. (Petrified with horror) Thunder of Heaven! (*After a pause, during which he is agitated by the full force of this discovery*) Oh my wife! My children!

Hu.

Hu. (*Closely surveying him, aside*) 'Tis well.—Speak, my son What wilt thou do?

The. Take my life, or let me have my Adelaide.

Hu. Impossible! Thou know'st the prohibition of the Almighty.

The. Then, let the Almighty punish me. Why did he suffer me to feel affection for her? I cannot lose her.

Hu. Dost thou not tremble at the rigour of our church?

The. I laugh at its rigour and its ban. He that robs me of my wife, can plunge me into no deeper misery.

Hu. Thou must renounce her. I command it.

The. I cannot, my father.

Hu. My curse be upon thee!

The. I cannot, my father.

Hu. The curse of thy mother be upon thee, from her grave!

The. And if every stone should curse me, every gust of wind should breathe damnation on me, it matters not.—I cannot.—She is my all.—And my children.—

Hu. 'Tis well. 'Tis right well. Embrace me, my son.

The. (*Astonished*) How, my father!

Hu. Heaven be praised! Thou hast fulfilled my every hope. Be at ease. I wished to prove thy sentiments. Adelaide is thy sister, but therefore is not less thy wife. Were such a marriage, in such circumstances, sinful before God, he would have planted natural abhorrence in the hearts of both. What is wholesome to society at large, is not always a law for a solitary instance. Be of good courage then, my son, trust in God, love thy wife, endeavour to make thy children honest, and deserve the blessing, which, in this hour, from the fulness of my heart, I bestow upon thee

The. Heavens! My father! My dear, good father! You awake me to new life. You restore to me my senses. Alas! They were almost gone for ever.

Hu. Yet must Adelaide suspect nothing of all this. A woman's nerves would be too weak for such a shock. In a woman's soul superstition is too deeply rooted. She would for ever think herself the vilest sinner, and by pious penitence embitter her own days, as well as thine and mine. Let her be, as heretofore, the daughter of old Bertram, and, except ourselves and him, let no one ever dive into the secret. Where is he, that he may enter into this our bond, and chain his oath to our's? Come nearer, Bertram. (*Opens the door, and Bertram enters*)

(*Seizes his hand*) Old man, congratulate me. I may now rejoice in safety at my children's happiness.

The. (*Embracing him*) Though thou art not the father of my Adelaide, I never shall forget, that to thy instructions I am obliged for my good, my faithful wife.—

Ber. (*Still always sorrowful*) Then, you know all?

Hu.

Hu. All! All! your scruples may vanish. The sin rest on me, on him and on his children!

The. Away with all thy false alarms! Think not of the past, but as it doubles our present joy. Forget all, except our love towards thee.

Ber. Dear, noble sir!—Yes, I will be quiet—if I can. You are two pious upright knights. You cannot wish to rob me of salvation.

Hu. The Almighty Ruler of the universe is witness how firmly I believe, that we are not wandering in the path of darkness. (*Draws his sword*) Come hither to me. Lay your hands upon this sword, and repeat my oath of everlasting secrecy.

Theobald repeats the oath with a firm, and Bertram with a tremulous voice.

By God and all his saints I swear, that this tongue never shall reveal the birth of Adelaide. If I break this oath—may the dread punishments of perjury be on my head—may no remission of my sins afford me rest—may the horrors of my conscience pursue me wherever I am driven by despair—may they settle on my death-bed, and rack me in my last agony, that I may in vain attempt to pray, in vain desire to die—may no sacrament, no priestly blessing be able to absolve me from this oath!—The grave, which, one day, will contain my bones, shall be the grave of this my secret. This I swear, as I hope for mercy from my God! Amen. (*Returns his sword into the scabbard*) 'Tis done. Embrace me, both of you. The sensation of repose, which has, for three and twenty years, been foreign to this bosom, returns to it to day. The prospect of happiness in my declining days now opens to my view. My heart sits light and easy. Every thing around me wears a lovelier aspect. Come, my son. Come to the arms of my twofold daughter. (*They go*)

Ber. Woe be on my head! What have I done?—What horror thrills through every vein!—What agonies of hell possess me!—My oath was blasphemy.—Hoary sinner that I am!—The grave already opens at my feet!—One transgression tumbles me to the earth.—An abettor of incest! God's thunder cloud is lowering towards me!—What mountain will hide me from the eye of the all-seeing judge? (*Sinks upon a seat, deprived of strength.—A pause.*) Weak old man! Thy brain's on fire. Compose thyself. They are phantoms, which thou see'st. Cast but one look upon that happy pair, upon those sweet harmless children, cast but one look of humanity, and all is at an end. What devil—(had he even served the cause of hell for many thousand years)—what devil would dare to draw upon himself the curse of these dear cherubs?—But am I not threatened with our church's ban? Will she not for ever cast me from her bosom? Will she not renounce me in
my

my dying hour, and leave me to the horrid tortures of my conscience?—Conscience!—Have I then alone, a conscience? Do not Sir Hugo and Sir Theobald share the innocent deceit? Is their example insufficient for my peace?—Alas! The triple bands of love have chained their unsuspecting hearts? Their eyes are dazzled by a temporal glare—eternity has vanished from their sight.—True it is, eight years have passed away, and God has suffered this abomination. No lightning has been launched upon the castle. No hail has spread destruction through the lands of Wulsingen. The husband, who is brother, the wife, sister, the fruits of incest—all are alive, awake each morning to some new delight, adore with cheerful mien their great Creator, and as yet no mark of Heaven's displeasure has fallen on them. God had a mark for fratricide: Why not too for incest?—Audacious wretch! Darest thou accuse the long suffering of thy Maker? Darest thou search into his secret ways? Sinner! Has not the Almighty given thee speech, perhaps that thou may'st be the instrument to end this abomination? And would'st thou be silent?—Think on thy last moment, when thou shalt sigh for consolation, when the holy priest shall demand account of all thy sins, and ere thou may'st be able to repeat it, some evil spirit gripes thy throat—when thou shalt long for the sacrament, and receive it but to everlasting damnation—when thou shalt depart with all thy sins upon thy head, and be dragged by demons to the dread tribunal of the Almighty.—Avaunt, compassion, and avaunt all fear of man!—I must save my soul!—I must save my soul!—The weight of rocks is thrown upon me!—The unfathomable gulf is gaping at my feet!—(*Sinks upon his knees*) Holy Virgin! Pray for me.

Cyrillus enters the saloon.

Cyr. The Lord be with thee, pious Bertram!

Ber. You are sent by the Lord.

Cyr. What ails thee? thy eyes roll horribly, as if some heavy sin weighed down thy conscience.

Ber. Alas! The tempter has tormented me.

Cyr. Then throw thyself into the bosom of the church, and thou shalt be at ease. What thus afflicts thy soul?

Ber. Reverend sir, you are right learned and pious. Do a work of charity, and rid me of my scruples.—You know that I lived eight years among the heathens. Many an abomination was I forced to suffer. Many a sin was I obliged to witness. And, if I ever mentioned the Almighty's vengeance, they laughed at me, and said that reason contradicted me.

Cyr. Reason without faith is as a board at sea, or an anchor upon land.

Ber.

Ber. Among them resided a young couple, united by sympathy and love, encircled with sweet children. Peace dwelt beneath their roof, un sullied virtue in their hearts, and yet this couple—(would you have believed it, reverend abbot?)—were brother and sister!

Cyr. (Strikes a cross) Oh God! How long suffering art thou, that the torrents of thy clouds, and Sodom's liquid sulphur have not yet consumed every dwelling of abomination! And thou, old man, darest to ascribe virtues to such people—sinners, who wantonly transgress the most sacred commandments of our God; who, like the sons and daughters of men in the times of our forefather Noah, daily provoke the Lord to vengeance? Dost thou not know that these seeming virtues are the wiles of the 'deceiver'?—I see—(and my heart bleeds) I see that the heathen has corrupted thee. Haste! haste! thou wandering chicken! Flee for refuge beneath the wings of the mother church! Chasten thy body by fasting and mortification! Ave Maria, ora pro nobis!

Ber. (Very much agitated) Then you think, right learned sir, that if a true-believing christian—by chance—without knowing it—should have married his sister, such a marriage ought not to be valid.

Cyr. Holy Norbert! Thou offend'st my ear by such a question.—Incest—Scarce dares my tongue pronounce the word.

Ber. Forgive me, reverend abbot, if I wish to dive to the bottom of this matter. Now, if for many years an union, like this, had been to the surrounding country an example, if hopeful, and well-educated children—

Cyr. Hold! I shudder. Woe, woe be on the offspring of incestuous intercourse!—Or, think'st thou then, that sin is less a sin, because the dreadful consequences are not visible to short-sighted mortals? Think'st thou that a thief is less a thief, because he revels in apparent peace upon the profits of his spoil?—who is able to fathom the long suffering of God? Who is able to unveil his wise designs, if his arm be slow in launching the avenging bolt?

Ber. Oh reverend sir! Answer me but another question. What must he do, who is privy to a sin like this?

Cyr. Go, and deliver up the guilty to offended justice, lest, at the latter day, he be condemned together with them.

Ber. But if they be his benefactors—

Cyr. Who is his first benefactor? God. Who has the first, most sacred claim upon his duty? God.

Ber. But if he be bound to keep this secret by an oath—

Cyr. Woe be upon him, who has, in the delirium of his sins, been led away to such an oath. Mistake not. God is not mocked. Has not the church alone the power to bind and to absolve? To break his oath would be the first step towards repentance.

Ber. (*Beyond himself, kneels down*) Oh reverend abbot! Hear the confession of a miserable sinner.

Cyr. (*Observing him attentively*) No, Bertram.—This place is not proper for the dispensations of our holy office.

Ber. Hear me, for God's sake, reverend sir! You have wounded me in my most tender part! You have pierced my conscience! You have poured glowing fire through all my bones! For God's sake, hear me! Alas! If—oh, if at this moment, the angel of death should seize me, and I should be called to render up my spirit, laden with this weight of sin, without confession and absolution—Oh! have compassion on me, reverend abbot! You are a servant of the Almighty, and one may, at any time, converse with the Almighty.

Cyr. Proceed, then.

Ber. 'Tis now some twenty years ago, that, early in the morning, Sir Hugo walked into my hut. But a few hours before, my wife had been delivered of a dead child. "Bertram," said he, as he threw back his cloak, and showed a newborn infant, "I know thee to be honest, and I place confidence in thy honesty. Behold this girl. She is the fruit of an unhallowed hour, when I forgot the faith, which I had sworn for ever to my wife. Her mother is no more. The child is helpless. Take care of it. Let it be reared as thy own daughter. Here is money for the purpose."

Cyr. Just Heaven! The scales fall from my eyes. This child—

Ber. Is Adelaide.

Cyr. The wife of her brother.

Ber. And mother of two boys.

Cyr. Wretch! And thou didst not hinder—

Ber. Reverend abbot, you forget I was a prisoner.

Cyr. (*Checking himself*) Is Adelaide acquainted with this dreadful story?

Ber. She believes me to be her father.

Cyr. Holy Virgin! Holy Norbert! What a discovery! (*Aside*) Excellent! This may answer.

Ber. What think you first of doing, reverend sir?

Cyr. (*With feigned humility*) I am a weak mortal, like thyself. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged. I hasten to the temple of the Lord, to watch, this night, at the steps of the altar, and chasten myself with fasting and mortification. Perhaps, God may be pleased to favour his servant with a revelation of his will.

Ber. I beg then, reverend sir, that you would grant me absolution.

Cyr. Appear at the confession-chair to-morrow after matins, and I will then impose some penance on thee, that thou may'st, with a pure heart, receive the holy sacrament.

Ber. Willingly, oh how willingly would I wound my back with the sharpest scourges—would I kneel till the flesh was worn

worn from my knees,—would I fast until my body was a skeleton,—if I thereby could rescue the unhappy pair from everlasting damnation! [Goes]

Cyr. Joy! Joy! The day is won. The period of silence now is at an end. I laugh at her rigid looks. I laugh at her unshaken fidelity. Shall I, like a fool, any longer stammer forth these distant hints? No. With open front will I declare my passion. Some degree of courage always will be felt, when addressing one who is not totally devoid of guilt.—Welcome, old Bertram, welcome! Hail to thy devout simplicity! It brings me nearer to the goal of my desires, than love, though armed with cunning. [Goes]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

The same saloon as in the third act.

Cyrillus and Adelaide enter.

Cyr. At last, noble lady, you have understood my wink.

Adel. (Rather burst) Your wink, reverend abbot!—You must be disposed to jest. A pious priest, an honest wife—and a wink! How can these agree! Secrets I have none, even at the confession-chair.

Cyr. Emblem of virtue! You misunderstand me. Methought that to us both the time seemed long, and therefore was my wink. The knights are sitting with full goblets, and relating tales of chivalry and war. My garb ordains sobriety in me. My ear is more accustomed to the psalter. You too are out of place, when seated at these revels. The horrid descriptions of stabbing and of hewing, of murder, and of fire, must hurt your tender heart. Can you then think me wrong, if, for the sake of milder conversation, I have drawn you hither.

Adel. Did you observe, how my two boys, with open mouths, hung on Sir Hugo's words? Did you observe, how my spindle even sometimes fell upon my lap, when he recounted, in such admirable terms, his feats among the Saracens? I attend with rapture to such dangerous exploits, when related by a humble knight, I feel a pleasure in the pain. I hold my breath, and listen to his every syllable. Nay, more

than once, I started from my seat with a loud shriek, when my heated imagination saw the faulchion sweep within a hand's breadth of his head.

Cyr. Like a child, when listening to its nurse's tales.

Ade. And as happy as that child.

Cyr. Such stories serve but to inflame the fancy, and to cause bad dreams.

Ade. A bad dream is pleasant too, for the sake of waking.

Cyr. Fair lady, you are fond of contradiction.

Ade. I hope my husband is not of the same opinion.

Cyr. Your husband! Every third word must be your husband. Do you live, then, for him alone?

Ade. I should think so, reverend abbot.

Cyr. And, on his account, renounce all sociable virtues?

Ade. That were wrong. Nor, does he require it. But where can I find opportunity to exercise them? Since the last tournament, at Regensburg, I have not left our castle. Here no one ever visits us, except our stern old uncle, who prefers the pictures in this room, to all the conversation of a simple woman.

Cyr. Then, to my visits you pay no regard?

Ade. Your visits, reverend abbot! Why, yes. Have I ever been uncivil to you? And even if I were, your office teaches you to bear with the failings of your flock.

Cyr. Yet not to hold my peace, but by good advice endeavour to amend them. Your conduct to me borders on disdain, (*with a look of tenderness*) and I have not deserved it from you.

Ade. Nor was I conscious of it. The reverence which your office must exact——

Cyr. Is of little value to the heart.

Ade. Have you a heart too? I thought it was your duty to renounce it, when you received the tonsure.

Cyr. My duty! Yes. Yet it will often rebel against my inclination. All these oaths and ceremonies are but a farce, to catch the multitude. The church is not so cruel to her children. To be an example to the world we must *appear* to be poor, chaste, and obedient. But to require, that, in private too, this oath should be inviolable, were to magnify the monk to an angel.

Ade. (*Seriously*) You teach a doctrine which I never heard before.

Cyr. Noble lady, understand me right. I mean to say, the virtue of a mortal must be reckoned in proportion to his strength. I myself can solemnly swear, that, since I wore this sacred garb, I never have departed from my duty. (*With increasing tenderness*) But there are master pieces of creation, to which all vows, and all religion are in vain opposed, where the eye forgets itself, the mouth becomes a liar in its prayer, and the heart enters on its rights.

Ade.

Ade. (With cold humility) Reverend abbot, let us return to the knights.

Cyr. No, noble lady. That I must not suffer. My looks must long have been no riddle to you. Long have I been unable to conceal my trouble and confusion. Your image follows me to the mass, to the confession-chair, and to the altar. (Seizing her hand) Fair lady, I love you.

Ade. (With the full sensation of that dignity which is the constant companion of virtue) What have I done, sir, that has inspired you with audacity to make so infamous a declaration? Have I ever been forgetful of my duty? Have I ever borne the semblance of a painted harlot? Have my eyes ever wandered round me? Has any unguarded word ever betrayed an unchaste heart?—And you dare to avow your love to me—dare, in the presence of God, surrounded by the spirits of my husband's ancestors, to attack that nuptial fidelity which I vowed in your hands.

Cyr. Be not enraged, fair lady——

Ade. Enraged! No. I despise you, and haste into Sir Theobald's arms, that I may complain of the indignity, which has so daringly been offered to the companion of his bed.

Cyr. (Hindering her attempts to go) Hold, Adelaide! As yet my eye is beaming with affection. You know how nearly a rejected passion is allied to hatred, and revenge. Beware!

Ade. Leave me, sinner! Thou art a dishonour to thy habit, and cover'st villainy with the venerable mantle of religion.

Cyr. (Holding her fast) With a single epithet I can annihilate thee.

Ade. Where can slander find an epithet, able to annihilate virtue?

Cyr. Incessuous.

Ade. You have lost your senses.

Cyr. Thou art thy brother's wife.

Ade. You have lost your senses.

Cyr. Never were they clearer. Thou need'st but ask old Bertram. Thou need'st but ask thy (what shall I call him?) father-in-law. At once wife and sister—at once aunt and mother. A goodly family, in truth!—

Ade. Forget not, sir, that you must render full account of what you now declare.

Cyr. Account! Why not? Do you suppose that there is any want of proofs? One word may suffice. You are the offspring of a happy hour, in which Sir Hugo revelled on the charms of some poor wench. Bertram was but your foster-father. The heathens carried him away, and you became your brother's wife.

Ade. This is too much. Remember that I am a wife and mother, that you are plunging a soul into despair. Retract your dreadful declaration, or produce some testimony of its truth.

Cyr. Are you not satisfied with the confession of old Bertram, which he, tormented by his conscience, has entrusted to my ear?

Ade. Heavens! It is not—cannot be.

Cyr. 'Tis even thus, fair lady. Yet need you feel no fear, while I remain your friend. Collect yourself. All may yet be well.—Away with that rigid look! Learn to know and esteem my heart. You can no longer be Sir Theobald's wife. I must report what has happened, to the holy chair at Rome, but you well know, that all depends upon the mode in which I report it. I will contrive, that instead of being punished, you shall be fixed in the neighbouring nunnery at Siegmar, for your life. This nunnery, my beauteous Adelaide, is by a subterraneous road connected with my abbey. The abbess is my friend. You shall want nothing, and your affectionate Cyrillus will esteem himself a happy man, in sweetening your solitary hours.

Ade. Scum of infamy! Hence thou infernal hypocrite! Revere my misery. Revere the sufferings of virtue. Thou never shalt degrade me to a deed unworthy of that title.

Cyr. Exasperate me not. Remember that your fate rests in my hands.

Ade. Say, in the hands of God.

Cyr. Do you still resist my love? Are you determined to drag me by compulsion to a vengeance the most horrible?

Ade. Begone, villain! Obey the devil whom thou serveest.

Cyr. Enough! As you are deaf to the voice of a friend, hearken to the priest of God.—In the name of the Crucified! I pronounce damnation on you! In the church, I pronounce its ban upon you! Cursed be Theobald and his incestuous wife! Cursed be their children, and their children's children! Let no true believer have compassion on their hunger and their thirst! Let fire and water be denied them through the holy Roman empire! Let him be defiled who dares to touch them! Let this castle, the seat of rank abomination, be demolished, and not one stone left upon another! Let the armour of the knight be broken at his feet! Let him and the partner of his infamy be chained together to a pile of wood, and vomit forth their sinful souls amidst the flames, to the glory of God's commandments! Then, headstrong being, when the fire shall have reached thy hair, and when the smoke already chokes thy utterance, then call in vain for succour and relief to the despised Cyrillus. With the smile of satisfied revenge I'll listen to thee, and withdraw the glowing coals, to cease upon thy lengthened sufferings. [Goes]

Ade. Heavens! What is the meaning of all this?—My joints totter.—My head swims.—I cannot yet conceive the horrors of my situation. I fancy all a dream, and look around for some kind soul who can relieve me from it. But in vain! Which ever way I look—or here—or there—despair is stand-
ing

ing with a ghastly grin. Bertram's dubious conduct now too plainly verifies the dire assertion.—Oh! From the summit of happiness and peace, thus, in a moment, plunged into the bottomless abyss of desolation! Nor I alone—My husband.—Children!—Heavens! My children!—Is there then no possibility of saving them? Will not *one* sacrifice atone for all to God and to the church? I am ready.—I'll fly into the deserts—waste my life in dreary solitude—mourn in distant cloisters—mercy only, mercy on Theobald, and his guiltless children! On me alone fall the vengeance of the Lord! Against me alone, who, forgetful of myself, dared to exchange the lowly cottage for the grandeur of the castle, be the arm of the Lord stretched out—not against him, that generous youth, who, in the fulness of affection, led a poor orphan to his bridal chamber, and now finds the grave of his repose in the arms of his sister! Away! Away! Adelaide, through night and darkness! Haste! Fly till thy wounded feet no longer can support thee! Away to deserts!—Bury thyself within some holy convent, that he may never hear thy name again.—Alas! 'Tis all in vain! This hypocrite, this monk, pronounced a curse upon my children, and my children's children. A mother's wretched fate will not alone content him. He will annihilate us all. Oh! To whom may I, without sin, confide my misery?—But soft! Who comes?—Away! Away into the garden! Every one who dwells within this castle is a companion in my guilt.

As she is going, she encounters Bertram, and sinks with a shriek to the earth.

Ber. Oh! The unhappy creature knows already. (*Throws himself at her side, and endeavours to revive her*) My daughter! My dear daughter!

Ad. (*Recovering*) Ah! Repeat that name!—Give me life again!—Declare once more, I am your daughter.

Bertram silently raises her.

(*Seizes his hand hastily*) Come hither, father! It was false. Was it not?—That monk is full of poison. Poisonous wicked lies! Were they not, my father?

Bertram is silent.

You do not answer. Perhaps you do not understand my words.—He has dared to say that I am not your daughter—and I love you so tenderly!

Bertram attempts to speak, but cannot.

You want to speak. I understand you. 'Twas silly to torment myself for such a reason. Your Adelaide is but a child.

Bertram throws his arms round her neck, and sobs.

With

With what affection do you share your daughter's grief! Who can now doubt that you are my father?—Peace! Peace! 'Twas but a phantom. 'Tis past, and I am well again.

Bertram turns away, raises his hands, and prays in silence.

He is praying. I ought not to disturb him. But my heart! My heart! It will burst from my bosom.—Dear father! Let me only hear one syllable. With one single syllable I will be content. I own that my alarm is folly, yet—think—your child is now before you.

Bertram sobs and continues to pray.

Good Heavens! Is it, then, so difficult but once to call me daughter? While I was little, when at any time you held me on your knee, and I was playing with your beard, I've often heard you say: "Dear child, thou art my only joy." And now surely I cannot have offended you. Oh quick!—Call me your daughter! Quick, my father! Think but, if that were true which the vile monk declared—your poor Adelaide—and the poor little children—

Bertram remains in his former position, weeps bitterly, and is scarce able to stand.

(Raising her voice to the highest pitch of anguish) Yet speak!—Father!—Father!—Oh! Speak to me. *(Shaking him)* Call me daughter! For God's sake, call me daughter!

Ber. (Falling to the earth) No. Thou art not my daughter.

Ade. (Wringing her hands in despair, bursts through a side door into the garden) Oh God! Oh God!

Ber. (Raising himself with difficulty) The cup is empty to its last dregs. I'll follow her. Despair has hurried her away, and may perhaps lead her to the edge of some steep precipice, or to the river's brink. I'll follow her, and, if my search be vain, plunge after her. [Goes]

Sir Hugo, Sir Theobald and Cyrillus enter.

Hu. (In jocund humour) How, reverend abbot, could you vanish thus, ere you had pledged a welcome to me, in the goblet ornamented with my arms? You pious men are not, in general, averse to wine.

Cyr. Wine cheers the heart of man. My heart is bleeding, and is dead to every joy.

Hu. Bleeding! What may have happened to it.

Cyr. The abominations of the world have wounded it.

Hu. Oh! Think not of them. The world will neither go worse nor better than it did a thousand years since, and will, another thousand hence. It turns round, and stumbles over good

good and bad. The bad we generally ourselves throw in its way.

Cyr. Sir knight, detain me not. The bell has rung for vespers.

Hu. No longer than is needful to present you with some gifts, which I collected for your abbey, when in Palestine. A thorn-twigg from the crown of Christ; green and unwithered: A splinter of the holy cross, on which a drop of blood has fallen that no hand is able to wash off. And, a piece of the garment, for which the soldiers cast lots. Enter, and receive these reliques from the hands of my son.

Cyr. Not from his, nor from your hands, sir knight.

Hu. No!—Well—as you please. What has entered your head now?

Cyr. Have you patience to hear me?

Hu. Yes, if you be not too tedious. For, the wine sparkles in the cup.

Cyr. Stretched at midnight, sleepless in my cell, I felt a strange oppression at my breast, and big drops stood upon my clay-cold brow.

Hu. You had eat too much, before you went to bed.

Cyr. Scoffer! Know that I speak in the name of the Almighty. Already I had prepared to leave my couch, and enter on some penance, when suddenly a more than mortal light illuminated my cell. I lifted up my eyes, and lo, the angel of the Lord stood before me in snow-white raiment. His forehead was covered with a cloud. In his right hand he held a sword. Then I fell down on my face, and prayed.

Hu. (*Smiling*) Well! What said the heavenly messenger?

Cyr. (*Significantly*) He said: "Among thy flock are tainted sheep, and from the hand of the shepherd, shall I require their souls in the last day."

Hu. Was this all?

Cyr. (*Still more significantly*) He said: "Sin has lifted up her head. The seed of destruction has taken root. The dark ages, which went before the flood, are come again."

Hu. Well! Further!

Cyr. (*Rivetting his eyes upon him*) He said: "Men have transgressed the holy law of marriage. They are become the seducers of innocence, and have given their daughters to be wives unto their sons."

Hugo and Theobald are thunderstruck.

Now, sir knight! Why thus altered? Whither is your sportive scoffing humour fled? Will you hear me more? He said: "Arise! Arm thyself with the church's ban. Report this abomination to the sacred representative of Saint Peter, that he may snatch the incestuous wife from her brother's arms, that he may destroy all, which has been generated in the lap of
of

of sin, that he may utterly extinguish this race which is a shame unto the righteous, that he may give both the root and branches to the flames, and scatter the ashes to the four winds of Heaven."

[Goes

Hu. (After a pause) We are lost, my son. God has given us into the hands of a blood-thirsty monk.

The. Heavens! How is it possible—

Hu. How! Bertram is perjured—that is evident. The appearance of the angel is a pious fraud.

The. Then shall this sword be plunged into the hoary traitor's—

Hu. Hold, my son! First rescue, then revenge.

The. Alas! How is rescue possible? He is gone, to bellow forth our wretched story, poisoned with all his rancour, to the fanatic priests at Rome. Nothing now remains, but to close the gates of our castle, and fight till its huge walls shall fall upon our heads.

Hu. No, my son. That were only unavailing rashness. The Roman church will call on every knight throughout the empire. All our neighbours, friends, relations, *must* direct their arms against us. What can'st *thou* oppose to such a force?

The. Resolution to die. Resolution, with this hand, to slay my wife and children, and then to bury myself beneath the ruins of our castle.

Hu. 'Tis well. I rejoice to find thou art a man. Be this our last resource.

The. Our last and only resource. I hasten to make preparations, to provide ourselves with victuals, to repair our walls, collect my followers—

Hu. Be not so rash, my son. (*Reflecting*) Has fate, then, left no other means?

The. None but ignominious flight.

Hu. Ignominious! Why ignominious? Is a hero less courageous, if he forsake the uncertain shelter of an oak, because the approaching lightning threatens to rend it from its base?

The. Enough! Let us fly. Let us turn our backs upon this castle, and, in some distant country, seek a hut large enough to hold a loving couple, small enough to escape the eyes of our pursuers.—Heavens! What a thought darts across my mind!—Mistivoi! Honest old Mistivoi! (*Draws out the hilt of the ring*) My father, this token of hospitality was given me by a heathen. Little did I imagine, I so soon should use it.

Hu. No, my son. Flight brings us no nearer to our purpose—*peace*. Flight is impossible, at least so long as Adelaide is unprepared. What pretence could'st thou urge for her following thee? To conceal the truth from her would be impossible, and to disclose it, highly dangerous. Thou know'st my thoughts upon this subject. She is a woman.

The.

The. True—but a woman far above her sex; noble and exalted in her sentiments, pious without superstition, steadfast, and resolute in danger. And do you reckon nothing on her love for me?

Hu. All, my son. But thou know'st not how firmly prejudices, which have been instilled in childhood, are rooted in the soul of woman, and the more firmly, the less they are loosened by an acquaintance with the world. Hast thou not to-day confessed to me, thyself, that it was only the last bloody scene of desolation, which had proved to thee the cruelty and injustice of excursions for our church?—No. I have hit upon another plan. Thou know'st, that, to defray the expences of my journey to the holy land, I mortgaged Rappach and Simmern to the abbey. Let us find the abbot, and, as the price of secrecy, make him a full donation of these two villages. The avarice of a priest will secure to us what zeal for God's honour never will tolerate.

The. But how, if he refuse—

Hu. 'Twill then be soon enough to think of other means. Come! Let us haste, ere in the rage of blind fanaticism, he has roused against us, the whole body of the church. (*As he goes*) Fool that I was, to think that I could bribe a monk with reliques! As if they wanted help to make as many as they pleased! ———

[*They go*]

The stage remains clear for a few minutes. Adelaide, with dishevelled hair, downcast head, and cheeks pale as death, slowly enters the saloon. A wild rolling of her eyes, and, at intervals, a faint contracted smile, betray the absence of her reason.

Ad. Still am I left alone.—Every living creature shuns me.—I was in the garden:—The birds flew from me:—Not a butterfly came near me:—Every flower I touched sunk shrivelled to the ground.—I looked towards Heaven:—The sun withdrew behind a cloud.—What is to become of me?—I am the most desolate wretch on earth.—Who will have pity enough to kill me?—(*Looking wildly at the pictures*) What men are these around me, with swords girt on their sides?—All stare at me,—and yet the blades start not from their scabbards. (*Kneeling before the picture nearest to her*) Have compassion on me, thou, that lookest so sternly at me!—Rid the earth of a monster —Or, if thou think thy sword too noble to be stained with my incestuous blood, lift up that foot, and, with its iron armour, tread on my neck, as on a poisonous worm.—I ask in vain!—'Tis my doom, to linger here, a prey to all the agonies of conscience.—If I could but pray—if any one would but pray for me.—Where are my children?—(*Shuddering*) Children! Have I children?—Have I a husband?—I am not a mother.—I cannot be a mother.—What I have borne has been the brood of hell. Satan's grin was mingled with the first smile of my babes.—Guide them hither

hither, great Avenger, that I may sprinkle these massy walls with their brains, collect their scattered limbs, consume their bones with fire, and give them to the hurricane, to sweep the dust aloft!—*Sinks exhausted upon a seat.—A pause* Where am I?—My eyes are dim.—Methinks it must be evening.—All is so still—so still!—No bird is singing.—Not a gnat is humming.—The sun sets—To-morrow, perhaps, he will throw his earliest beams upon my grave, and kiss a tear from my dear brother's cheek.—Where will they dig my grave?—Beneath the lime-trees towards the East?—Oh no!—Among the nettles, under the wall of our church-yard.—They will fix a small black cross upon it.—“The Lord have mercy on her soul.”—Yes.—Die—I will die—I, and my poor children. Without him I cannot live; with him I must not live—God will judge us. He will cleanse their tainted souls for millions of years in purgatory, and, at last, receive the innocents among his angels.—The idea dawns.—To die!—No evil spirit has inspired that thought (*Kneels*) Holy mother of God! Behold, a sinner kneels before thee in the dust! Mercifully deign to look upon me, and if the dark design of death, which broods within my soul, be not the delusion of my own brain, or the instigation of the tempter, oh! vouchsafe some miracle to me, thy handmaid! Steel my breast, nerve my hand, and arm me with some instrument of murder, that I may discover, thou art with me!

Wilibald and Ottomar enter.

Wil. (With a dagger in his hand) Mother! Mother! Look at this dagger—My grandfather took it from the Saracens.—See, how it glitters!

Adel. (Dreadfully alarmed) I am heard.

Wil. Only look, mother, only look.

Adelaide rises trembling, starts at Wilibald, walks slowly to him as if intending to catch something by surprise, and snatches the dagger from his hand.

(Affrighted) Dear mother, it's sharp.

Adel. Is it so?

She looks wildly at the dagger, at her children, and then again at the dagger. By degrees her wildness softens into sorrow. She heaves deep sighs, and at length, weeps.)

Ott. (Creeping to her and fawning) Dear mother, what's the matter?

Wil. Are you ill, dear mother?

Adel. Ill, very ill—weak, very weak. Blessed mother of the Crucified, complete thy miracle! Oh strengthen me!

Ott. (Pulls Wilibald sorrowfully) Come brother!

Wil. Come, and let us pray for my mother.

(Going)
Adel.

Ade. (*Hastily intercepting their way*) Whither would you go?—Back!—(*Drags them to the front of the stage*) Back, spawn of hell!—This arm is consecrated by the Lord.—Ah!—Ye shall not escape it. Immortal strength is given to this hand! Tremble! Your hour is come.

Ott. (*Creeping behind Wilibald*) Oh brother, what does she mean?

Wil. Dear mother; my father will be coming soon. Let us go to meet him.

Ade. Father, said'st thou?—Who is thy father?—Ha! Viper!—Must thou still recall it to my mind? (*Lifts her arm*) Hold! Come hither, Wilibald.—Come hither, Ottomar.—Tell me—have you said your prayers to day?

Both. Oh yes, dear mother.

Ade. What was your prayer?

WH. That God would be merciful to us.

Ade. (*Bursts into tears*) God be merciful to you!

Ott. You're crying, dear mother.

Ade. Answer me further. Have you, since you said your prayers, done nothing wrong?

Wil. I've done nothing wrong, I am sure, mother.

Ott. (*Stammering*) I—I took a bird's egg from one of the village boys. I am very sorry for it.

Ade. Kneel down, and beg God's forgiveness.

Ott. (*Kneels*) God will forgive me; for I'll give him all the first nest I find.

Ade. (*In a tremor*) There!—'Tis done!—The moment is arrived.—Guide my arm, oh God! Let me but reach the heart at once—that I may not see the struggles—that I may not hear the groans.—Away! Away! Quick! *She flies at Wilibald with the uplifted dagger, and sinks at his feet, deprived of strength. The dagger falls from her hand. She throws her arms round the children, presses them close to her heart, and weeps bitterly.*

Both. (*Hanging on her neck, and caressing her*) Dear mother!

Ade. In vain does the stern sense of duty exact the murder of these sweet innocents. They are the fruit of infamy, an abomination both to God and man.—Look, ye inexorable judges, look at this guiltless smiling face. In truth, if Satan be concealed behind this mask, no wonder he so easily seduces faints. This child has robbed another of an egg: This is the heaviest transgression, and he heartily repents it.

Ott. I do indeed, dear mother.

Ade. He has prayed too, this morning. His prayer was not the gabble of a vile dissembling monk. 'Twas that pure praise, which God has prepared for himself, from the mouths of infants. No.—In the eye of God, you are forgiven—you, and your parents; for they knew not what they did. Come, children. Help your mother to seek consolation in your father's arms. (*As she is going, she suddenly starts trembling back*)

Woe be upon me! What am I about to do? Some infernal spirit is trying to delude me,—is trying to rob me of my last and only consolation—happiness hereafter. 'Till now I have been ignorant, and the mercy of my Judge will pardon me. But, the next embrace must be eternal death.—In vain does the tempter whisper to me: "'Tis but fraternal love. A sister sure may clasp a brother to her heart." Begone, ye lures to sin! I cannot command my heart. 'Tis the heart of a fond loving wife,—a sister's love is foreign to it—God has passed his heaviest denunciation upon incest. Did not the abbot say this? Did he not curse me and my children? Did not the holy Virgin arm me by a miracle? Was it not the finger of the Highest, which pointed at the sacrifice, ordained to be offered to him, by my hands?—Oh temporal, and eternal welfare of my children, the most sacred of a mother's cares, what will become of you, if, in this hour, my strength forsake me?—Come nearer, my pretty ones. Tell me what you mean to do, should you ever become men?

Wil. I'll be a brave knight, like my father.

Out So will I, mother.

Wil. I'll fight with lances and swords.

Out. So will I, mother.

Wil. I'll do good to the poor, protect widows and orphans, and rescue the oppressed; for my father says, these are the duties of a knight.

Out. I'll do all this too, mother.

Ad. Will you indeed? Alas! No. You never can be knights.—You are not born as knights.—No one will engage with you.—No one will draw his sword against you.—Your name will be erased from heraldry.—The badge will be torn from your helmets.—Your horses will be slain,—your armour broken, and your shield trodden upon. Overwhelmed with ignominy, you will fly the lists, and curse the breasts which gave you suck. You will take refuge in deserts and in forests, will turn your backs on the demerits of your forefathers, and be pursued into every quarter by the church's ban.—The pious man will strike a cross, when he espies you at a distance.—The dastardly assassin will, unpunished, plunge a dagger in your hearts, and give your carcases for food to ravenous vultures.—No —(*Seizes the dagger*) No! Rather shall you perish by a mother's hand.—Never shall any base poltron be able to attack you? Never shall any base poltroon be able to attack you! Never shall your name be marked with infamy! Never shall whispering slander tell your mother's crime! Ye shall not wander in the wilderness, scratching the earth for food, suing to the clouds of Heaven for drink, cursing the Creator, and your own existence. My soul was pure and undefiled, when I conceived you. My soul is pure and undefiled in this sad hour.—Oh God! Their spirits came from thee. Thou gavest them to me. Take them back, and

and hereafter let me find them at thy throne.—(*Quivering, and almost beyond herself*) Why do you tremble, children?—Why do you look at me so fearfully?—Do not tremble.—You will be happy.—You have prayed.—You have done nothing wrong.—Come hither, Wilibald!—Embrace me.—Embrace your mother once again.

Wil. (*Embracing her*) Dear mother.—

Ade. (*Plunges the dagger into his back, to the hilt.*) Farewell, beloved child! Farewell!

Wilibald sinks with a faint groan at his mother's feet, writhes his body, and expires.

Ott. (*Shuddering*) Oh my brother!

Ade. (*Fixing her eye instantly upon the corpse*) There! 'Tis done!—But another struggle! But one convulsion more!—Now he is dead—the spirit gone—its tenement momentary.—There soars the liberated soul.—Its chains are broken.—A more than mortal lustre folds it.—And see—an angel takes charge of him—leads him with friendly guidance to the throne of God.—There he stands!—Sweet babe!—Why art thou there alone?—Where is thy brother?

Ott. (*Who in the mean time has crept into a corner, kneels, and raises his little hands*) Dear mother, let me live.

Ade. (*Violently startled*) Ha!—What fobs in the dark, there? Speak!—Answer me!

Ott. (*In a tone of supplication*) It's little Ottomar.

Ade. Thou still here! And alone! Where is thy brother?

Ott. Oh! There he lies.

Ade. 'Tis false!—Dost thou not hear his call? Art thou deaf to thy brother's voice?

Ott. I hear nothing, dear mother.

Ade. Hark!—Again!—And now a third time!—Look up! He is smiling on us.—He beckons!—He calls!—Quick! Quick! Follow him.

She stabs him in the breast several times.

Ott. (*Strikes both hands upon the wound, and creeps towards her on his knees*) Oh mother—oh—poor—little—Ottomar—

Ade. Away, basilisk! (*Stabs him once more—he falls and dies*) Ha! That was well aimed!—That hit the vital part!—He moves no more!—Not one more sigh!—Triumph! Triumph! I have torn them from the claws of Satan.—There they hover, hand in hand.—Their voice is hymns of praise, their raiment light.—Triumph! Triumph! I laugh at the church's ban, and at its threats.—The sacrifice is offered. God looked down, well pleased. (*Throws the dagger from her*) Away! Away to chapel!—Away to supplication and thanksgiving! (*Spies blood upon her hands*) Hold!—This is blood.—Thus I dare not pass the thresholds of the temple.—Thus stained with blood, I dare not sprinkle myself with consecrated water, nor strike the token of the holy cross upon

my bosom.—I will wash myself.—I will go down to the well, where my beloved waits.—(*Stumbles against Willibald*) What is this?—Gently! Gently!—Hift!—The children are asleep.—Oh that I may not have been too loud!—See! This poor boy must have some horrid dream.—His mouth seems contorted, as if he were in pain.—Poor child!—The gnats will not suffer him to sleep.—They have stung him till he bleeds.—Stop! Stop!—(*Tears off her veil and covers Willibald*) There, little slumberer! Sleep in peace!—But what have I left for this?—Shall I, for this boy's sake, tear my handsome veil?—Is it not large enough to cover both?—Why do you lie at such a distance from each other, as if some storm had cast you hither?—Let me bring this close to his brother.—Gently—softly—that he may not wake.—

She carefully lifts up the body of Ottomar, lays it near that of his brother, kneels, covers both with the veil, and is busy in observing on every side, that no hole is left.

Sir Hugo and Sir Theobald enter.

The. What art thou doing, Adelaide?

Ade. Hift! Hift! I have sung the boys to sleep.

She raises the veil, and discovers the bloody bodies.

The. Jesus Maria!

He staggers backward to the nearest pillar, against which he leans, without strength. His whole frame quivers. His countenance is horribly convulsed. His eyes are rivetted upon the bodies, and he sheds not a tear.

Hu. Heavens!—Too late!—Wretched being! What hast thou done.

He stands, with both hands clasped, and fixed to the spot.

Ade. (*With the smile and air of insanity*) I sang a pretty hymn.—The holy Virgin taught me—and, while I sung, the sweet boys dropped asleep.

Hu. Alas! She raves!—

Ade. Hift!—Speak lower, grey beard.—I'll go into the garden.—I'll pluck flowers—violets, roses, pinks and lilies. I'll scatter them upon my cherubs—and when they wake with pleasant odours round them, they will reward their mother with a kiss for all her care.—Sit down here, old man.—Beware lest any breath of wind disturb the veil—or any gnat come near to sting them.—Hush!—In a moment I return.—

(*Runs away*)

Hu. (*After a pause—looks at his son—then at the bodies—and then towards Heaven*) Almighty God! Oh let this sacrifice to superstitious madness be the last, and receive these guiltless souls among thy holy host of angels!—

He kneels, and kisses the children. The curtain falls.

FINIS.



